

Chicago In Creative Literature
1900-1925

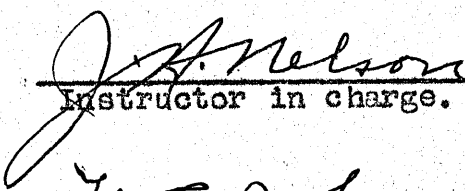
by

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

It seems to be the fashion just now to argue about Chicago, and for many years it has been the practice to write about her. Since 1892 she has been a literary center of some prominence and she so remains at the present day. From the time that Moody pictured her sitting

-- at the northwest gates,
With restless violent hands and casual tongue
Molding her mighty fates,

down to these later days when Sandburg's characterization "city of the big shoulders" she has been thought of as the typical American city:

Stormy, husky, brawling. . . proud to be
alive, Hog Butcher, Tool Maker and Freight
Handler to the Nation. . .¹

When one considers the size, the beauty and the remarkable development of the city the reason for the interest of literary men in Chicago is self-evident. In order

¹Sandburg, Carl, Chicago Poems, p.4.

to supply a background for a literary history of the city, it has seemed worth while to sketch in outline some of the more striking features of her development.

A city of 4,000,000 with a history of less than a hundred years has probably never been found in the annals of municipalities. How this came about may be the subject of a masterpiece, not yet written. However, the chief elements of the city's greatness are to be found in advantages of location.

The downward thrust of Lake Michigan fixes the lower end of the Lake as the turning point for traffic and gives Chicago a commanding position over a wide domain. Water traffic came to the aid of the city from the very first year of its charter in 1833. A little later, the railroads found Chicago to be a convenient terminal point, and a score of lines converged upon the city. Under these conditions the industrial advance of the city was very rapid.

To quote from Charles E. Merriam's intimate study of Chicago politics:

In 1871 Chicago was a heap of ashes, ruined physically and financially, and only an optimistic observer would have seen here the makings of one of the world's greatest cities within a generation. But, the miracle happened. The incredible catastrophe evoked a spirit of incredible energy and within a few years, the marks of the devastating had been almost removed. The population of Chicago increased from 298,977 in 1870 to 503,185 in 1880, and its wealth and position proportionally. Out of the ashes came a great city, greater in

numbers and wealth and far greater in spirit and energy.¹

Twenty years later the World's Columbian Exposition initiated another phase in the life of the city. The original impulse to this development was due perhaps to the familiar booster spirit of the frontier, but this was transformed in the course of the years into something far finer and better. The imagination of the city was captured by the exposition which seemed to inspire it with a new interest in the cultural aspects of municipal life.

The spirit of 1893 blossomed also in the City Plan of 1907. This was largely the creation of the Commercial Club but in a broader sense was an expression of the higher life of the people of Chicago. The idea of conscious city building spread abroad and became a part of the city's understanding of its future lines of advance.

As Matthew Josephson writes in a recent number of The Outlook:

The last Indians departed from Chicago more than eighty years ago. Yet, it is still a frontier land in the economic sense. Those who hurry in a milling crowd, those who labor, struggle violently, drive competitors to the wall, or kill -- they are not fools or maniacs: they still see clearly new and unclaimed Eldorados in meat, dried blood, tankage, real estate, beer. Hence the stupendous contrasts: granite museums and universities rise near the in-

¹Merriam, Charles E., Chicago, pp. 5-6.

ferno of the stock yards, the great gaps in the face of the city, the "bad-lands" as they were called. In the era of breathless expansion there had been no time to harmonize things or compose order.¹

Every city must struggle hard to find its own soul. Time stained urban centers like London and Paris achieved their personality long ago and can trace their experience down through the centuries. In Chicago a spirit broods upon the face of the waters. Although comparatively young as cities go, she has already achieved an individuality all her own. Moreover, this forcefulness, vigor and strength have been adequately expressed by the literary men and women who have made it their home.

Chicago recognizes two kinds of authors as peculiarly her own: those who have drawn upon her deep elemental life for their themes, and those who have been hers geographically though they have gone elsewhere for their themes. Both have been cultural factors: both have exerted an influence on writers and readers. It is with the first group of writers that this study proposes to deal. Its subject matter consists principally of excerpts which illustrate the various cultural aspects of the life of the city. The material has all been found in the Library of the University of Kansas.

¹Outlook, CLI (Jan. 30, 1929), pp. 164-165.

Chapter II

Chicago: A Literary History

The literary foundations of Chicago go back to pioneer times, but it is of the present we would speak. In literature the city appears to have progressed by periods, but none of them have knit up with its successors. The years between 1871 and 1902 constitute one span. The decade between 1902 and 1912 was another. A third falls between 1912 and 1925. Of the three, the first period -- or rather part of it, from 1892 to 1902, was the most interesting. During this interval a number of first class writers came, stayed a while and then went on to Manhattan or some other place.

Concerning the brilliant young men who served their literary apprenticeship at this time, a little matter of stock-taking might be worth while. The following information is taken from a recent article "Chicago: An Obituary" by Samuel Putnam. First, he gives us a list of Chicago's more important emigrés:

Thorstein Veblen
Edgar Lee Masters
Sherwood Anderson

Upton Sinclair
Brand Whitlock
George B. McCutcheon

Ben Hecht
 Floyd Dell
 Maxwell Bodenheim
 Francis Hackett
 George C. Cook
 Susan Glaspell
 Margaret Anderson
 Will Payne
 Hamlin Garland

Roy S. Baker
 George Ade
 Finley Peter Dunne
 Harold McGrath
 Emerson Hough
 Alice C. Henderson
 Eunice Tietjens
 Rex Beach
 Theodore Dreiser
 Frank Norris

And here is a list of those who were still in the city at the time the article was written:

Henry B. Fuller
 Carl Sandburg
 Clarence Darrow
 Harriet Monroe
 Clara Laughlin
 Marion Strobel
 Keith Preston
 Edith Wyatt
 Mary Aldis
 Edna Ferber
 Henry K. Webster
 Robert M. Lovett
 Robert Herrick
 Robert J. Casey
 Charles Collins

Mark Turbyfill
 Florence Clark
 Lew Sarett
 Wilbur D. Nesbit
 Edwin H. Lewis
 Wallace Rice
 Richard H. Little
 H.K. Moderwell
 Hi Simons
 Earl Reed
 Opie Reed
 Pearl Andelson
 Henry J. Smith
 John Drury
 George Dillon
 John T. McCutcheon.¹

It looked for a while as if Hamlin Garland would be a Chicagoan. He finally went east, however, and today is one of the most respected of emigrés from Chicago. In that fine autobiography "A Daughter of the Middle Border", we read of his growing discontent with Chicago because of its slow recognition of the higher elements of culture:

¹Putnam, Samuel, The American Mercury, VIII (August, 1926), 425.

Meanwhile Chicago, rushing toward its two million mark had not lived up to its literary promise of '94. In music, in painting, in sculpture, and architecture it was no longer negligible, but each year its authors appeared more and more like a group of esthetic pioneers heroically maintaining themselves in the midst of an increasing tumult of material upbuilding. One by one its hopeful young publishing houses had failed, and one by one its aspiring periodicals had withered in the keen wind of Eastern competition. . .

It was a very significant fact that Chicago contained in 1903 but a handful of writers, while St. Louis, Cleveland, Detroit and Kansas City had fewer yet. "What is the reason for this literary sterility?" I asked my companions. "Why should not these powerful cities produce authors?" The answer was: "Because there are fewer supporters of workers in the fine arts. Western men do not think in terms of art. There are no literary periodicals in these cities to invite the work of the author and the illustrator, and there is, moreover, a tendency on the part of our builders to give the eastern sculptor, painter or architect the jobs which might be done by local men. Until Chicago has at least one magazine founded like a university and publishing houses like Scribner's and Macmillan's our authors and artists must go to New York."¹

It is indeed remarkable that at the moment when Hamlin Garland was lamenting over Chicago's literary sterility, men and women were working on books that made it possible for H.L. Mencken, a few years later, to call the city "the literary capital of the United States":

Go back twenty or thirty years, and you will scarcely find a literary movement that did not originate under the shadow of the stock yards. . .
The new poetry movement is thoroughly Chicagoan:

¹Garland, Hamlin, A Daughter of the Middle Border, pp. 271-272.

the majority of its chief poets are from the Middle West: Poetry, the organ of the movement is published in Chicago. So with the little theatre movement. Long before it was heard of in New York it was firmly on its legs in Chicago. And to support these various reforms and revolts, some of them of great influence, others abortive and quickly forgotten, there is in Chicago a body of critical opinion that is unsurpassed for intelligence and discretion in America. The New York newspapers, in the main, employ third rate journalistic hacks as dramatic critics and their book reviews are ignorant and ridiculous. But, in Chicago there is an abundance of sound work in both fields, and even the least of the newspapers makes a palpable effort to be honest and well informed.¹

The title "literary capital" was perhaps a misnomer and Chicago never took it seriously. Yet, in 1920 the city was quite a literary center. Miss Monroe's magazine, Poetry, had done a pioneer work in giving new men a hearing, and Sandburg, Masters and Lindsay had attained an international reputation. Mr. Masters had already begun to publish novels. Henry Blake Fuller had recently issued two of his latest works of fiction including a volume of free verse, Lines Long and Short. Howard Vincent O'Brien was shortly to become for a time at least a best seller with Gold. And over in Evanston, Henry Kittell Webster was writing both serious novels and best sellers.

Chicago today is becoming increasingly aware of itself. On every side there is a tremendous activity in

¹Literary Digest, LXVI (July 24, 1920), pp. 29-30.

the arts. The poets especially are active and the Poetry Magazine has extended its influence to half a dozen groups that claim no kinship with it:

At the University of Chicago a group of poets have initiated a new magazine The Forge in which their own work appears side by side with that of contributors from the outer world. Its editorial board includes Bertha James, winner of the Horace Spencer Fiske Prize in Poetry for 1922. It compares favorably with other magazines and has a most catholic policy.¹

The pages of the national magazines have recently been filled with evidence of the activity of the Chicago poets, and the new edition of The New Poetry, an anthology by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, bears witness to their numbers and the quality of their verse, for here are included: Mary Alder, Sherwood Anderson, Emanuel Cornevali, Alice Corbin, Florence Keper Frank, Fenlov Johnson, Maurice Leseman, Edgar Lee Masters, Harriet Monroe, Carl Sandburg, Lew Sarett, Frances Shaw, Marion Strobel, Eunice Tietjens, Mark Turbyfill, Glenway Wescott, Yvor Winters, and Edith Wyatt.²

But it is to the novelists that one must look for an expression of the character of Chicago, and in their books we find it. Protest, revolt, resentment against the damnation of the commonplace are characteristics prominent in most of the outstanding novels that have Chicago

¹Bookman, LX (Jan., 1925), p. 567.

²Monroe, Harriet and Henderson, Alice C., The New Poetry; An Anthology. 1926

as a background. Hamlin Garland in A Daughter of the Middle Border; Edgar Lee Masters in Skeeters Kirby and Children of the Market Place; Joseph Medill Patterson in Rebellion and A Little Brother of the Rich; Sherwood Anderson in Marching Men and Winesburg Ohio; I.K. Freidman in By Bread Alone; Ben Hecht in Erik Dorn and Robert Herrick in Chimes; these, and many more bear evidence of the influence that the primitive and elemental life of the city exercises on its writers.

Any literary survey of Chicago during the first quarter of the century would be incomplete without some account of the writers who flourished there during this period. In the pages that follow a number of Chicago authors will be discussed individually.

Henry B. Fuller

Henry B. Fuller was born in Chicago. Years ago he wrote with a certain quaintness of setting, The Chevalier of Pensieri-Vani, but he really found himself when he took up his own city and produced The Cliff-Dwellers. This book with its realistic setting was a pronounced success. It was followed by With The Procession, which also deals with Chicago life.

Bibliography:

The Chevalier of Pensieri-Vani. 1891.
The Cliff-Dwellers. 1893.
With the Procession. 1895.
From the Other Side. 1898.
The Last Refuge. 1900.

Under the Skylights. 1901.
 On the Stairs. 1918.
 Bertrams Cupe's Year. 1919.

Theodore Dreiser

Theodore Dreiser was born in Terre Haute, and received his college training at the University of Indiana. He served his apprenticeship on Chicago newspapers in the early nineties, when Eugene Field, George Ade and many other literary lights were still active. Dreiser has told the story of those days in plain, unromantic language, and his portrayal runs true to the tradition of that time. Despite his long residence in the East this province must claim him because he represents a stage in its cultural growth.

Bibliography:

Sister Carrie. 1900.
 Jennie Gerhardt. 1911.
 The Financier. 1912.
 The Titan. 1914.
 The Genius. 1915.
 A Hoosier Holiday. 1916.
 The Hand of the Potter. 1918.
 A Book About Myself. 1922.
 An American Tragedy. 1925.

Robert Herrick

Robert Herrick was born at Cambridge, Mass., and educated at Harvard College. He was one of the gifted young men that President Harper gathered from the ends of the earth when he established the University on the Midway. He remained with the institution until 1923, although he had

numerous opportunities of going elsewhere. With his New England background he represents the best that Puritanism has left behind.

Bibliography:

The Gospel of Freedom. 1898.
 The Common Lot. 1904.
 Memoirs of an American Citizen. 1905.
 The Master of the Inn. 1908.
 Together. 1908 .
 The Healer. 1911.
 Clark's Field. 1914.
 The World Decision. 1916.
 Homely Lilla. 1923.
 Waste. 1924.
 Chimes. 1925.

Finley Peter Dunne

"Pete" Dunne was born in Chicago and began work there as a newspaper reporter in 1885. Through the medium of one "Martin Dooley", publican of Archey Road, he passed humorous comments upon a variety of subjects. His books first came into prominence at the time of the Spanish-American War, when his comments on the various phases of that conflict made the country and Admiral George Dewey explode with laughter.

Bibliography:

Mr. Dooley in Peace and War. 1898.
 Mr. Dooley in the Hearts of His Countrymen. 1899.
 Mr. Dooley's Philosophy. 1900.
 Mr. Dooley's Opinions. 1901.
 Dissertations by Mr. Dooley. 1906.
 Mr. Dooley Says. 1910.
 Mr. Dooley on Making a Will. 1919.

Emerson Hough

Emerson Hough seemed to his generation to be the very essence of the Middle West. He was born in Iowa, but became a Chicagoan by years of living there. The very mention of his name brings before us vivid pictures of the great outdoors, the mountains and the arctic snows. Good Chicagoan though he is, he loves to locate his novels in places away from the city.

Bibliography:

The Mississippi Bubble. 1902.
 The Law of the Land. 1904.
 Heart's Desire. 1905.
 The Sowing. 1909.
 The Purchase Price. 1911.
 The Man Next Door. 1916.
 The Way Out. 1918.
 The Web. 1919.
 The Covered Wagon. 1922.

Harriet Monroe

Harriet Monroe, American poet and editor, is a native of Chicago. In 1892, her "Columbian Ode" was read and sung at the dedication ceremonies of the World's Fair. In 1912, she founded and became the editor of Poetry, an endowed magazine of verse. From the first it was hospitable to early work by Vachel Lindsay and Edgar Lee Masters, and to fledgling poems by Carl Sandburg, which had vainly knocked at Eastern doors.

Bibliography:

Commemoration Ode. 1892.
 The Passing Show. 1903.
 The Dance of the Seasons. 1911.

You and I. 1914 .
 The Difference. 1924.
 Poets and Their Art. 1926.

Lew Sarett

There was nothing in the early life of Lew Sarett to suggest that he would some day be a woods guide, a teacher in a great university and a poet. Until he was nine years old he knew nothing of the wretched life of Chicago's foreign quarters. At this time his father secured employment that took him and his family to the North Woods. Subsequently, Lew had to return to Chicago and toil at menial jobs -- until he could get an education. He now divides his time between teaching at Northwestern University and lecturing.

Bibliography:

Many Many Moons. 1920 .
 The Box of God. 1922 .
 Slow Smoke. 1925 .

Edna Ferber

Edna Ferber was born in Michigan, but educated in the public schools of Appleton, Wisconsin. As a child, she wanted to be an actress and has never quite lost this craving. However, at seventeen, she began work as a reporter on the Appleton Daily Crescent. Later, she was employed by the Milwaukee Journal and the Chicago Tribune. Her special contribution to American literature thus far has been her studies of American women in business. So Big was the novel awarded

the Pulitzer Prize in 1925.

Bibliography:

Emma McChesney and Co. 1915.
 The Girls. 1921.
 Gigalo. 1922.
 So Big. 1924 .
 Show Boat. 1926.
 Mother Knows Best. 1927.

Sherwood Anderson

Sherwood Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio, of Scotch-Irish ancestry. His father was a journeyman harness maker. At the age of seventeen he came to Chicago and worked several years as a laborer. Then he enlisted in the Spanish American War. In 1921, he received the prize of two thousand dollars offered by the Dial to further the work of the American author considered to be the most promising.

Bibliography:

Windy McPherson's Sons. 1916 .
 Marching Men. 1917 .
 Mid-American Chants. 1918 .
 Winesburg, Ohio. 1919 .
 Poor White. 1920 .
 Many Marriages. 1923 .
 Dark Laughter. 1925 .

Edgar Lee Masters

Edgar Lee Masters was born in Kansas, but brought up in Illinois. His schooling was desultory, but he read widely. He studied one year at Knox College and learned Greek, a fact which has influenced him deeply. He studied law in his father's office at Lewiston, and practiced there for a year. Then he went to Chicago where he became a

successful attorney and also took an active part in politics.

Bibliography:

Blood of the Prophets. 1905.
 The Spoon River Anthology. 1915.
 Songs and Satires. 1916.
 The Great Valley. 1916.
 Slave's Rock. 1919.
 Doomsday Book. 1920.
 Mitch Miller. 1920.
 Children of the Market Place. 1922.
 Skeeters Kirby. 1923.
 The New Spoon River. 1924.
 Selected Poems. 1925.
 Lee, A Dramatic Poem. 1926.

Carl Sandburg

Carl Sandburg was born at Galesburg, Illinois, of Swedish parentage. At the age of thirteen, he left school and began driving a milk wagon. He subsequently became a bricklayer and a farm laborer in the wheat growing regions of Kansas. After an interval spent at an Illinois college, he became successively a hotel servant in Denver, a coal-heaver in Omaha, a soldier in the Spanish American War, and finally, a journalist. He worked also as district organizer for the Social-Democratic party of Wisconsin, and was secretary to the mayor of Milwaukee, 1910-12.

Bibliography:

Chicago Poems. 1916.
 Cornhuskers. 1918.
 Smoke and Steel. 1920.
 Slabs of the Sunburned West. 1922.
 Rootabaga Stories. 1922.
 Rootabaga Pigeons. 1923.
 Selected Poems. 1926.
 Abraham Lincoln -- The Prairie Years. 1926.
 The American Songbag. 1927.

Ben Hecht

Ben Hecht was born in New York City, in 1893. He traveled much until he was eight years old and then moved to Racine, Wisconsin. College never beckoned him, and today it stands for all that is hateful to him. Moreover, he seems thoroughly out of sympathy with classicism, puritanism and didacticism in all its forms. Already, at thirty, he is the most talked about, the most praised and the most reviled of the Chicago group. There is undoubtedly much talent in Mr. Hecht. We should like to see larger audiences come into contact with the fruits of his ability and reflection.

Bibliography:

The Wonder Hat. 1920.
 Erik Dorn. 1921.
 A Thousand and One Afternoons in Chicago. 1922.
 Gargoyles. 1922.
 The Florentine Dagger. 1923.
 Humpty Dumpty. 1924.
 Count Bruger. 1926.

From this meager account, it is evident that Chicago has produced a goodly number of writers during the first quarter of the century. What American city can show anything like as many literary successes? New York claims the honor of being the literary center of America. But how many books of sweeping popularity have come out of New York during the last twenty-five years? Chicago, on the other hand, has been furnishing a steady line of successes.

Chapter III

This Is Chicago

To the literary commentator on Chicago, the mention of the name of the city has an electrifying effect. In this name poets and novelists have come to see a symbol, a slogan, a watchword, an appeal on many scores. "Chicago", says one of the characters in Fuller's Cliff Dwellers, "is Chicago. Nothing can stop it."

To the writer, indeed, this impulsive city appears to be one huge kettle of energy seething the whole day long. Strangely enough, its strenuous future was foreseen by Robert de La Salle, almost the first white man to breathe its invigorating air. In a letter written upon the banks of the Chicago River nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, he made this amazing prophecy:

If I were to give this place a name, I would derive it from the nature of the place and the nature of the men who will occupy this place -- ago, I act; circum, all around: "Circago."¹

Carl Sandburg certainly knows his native city. In the poem "Chicago" he reveals the mood of the city as not

¹quoted from Chatfield-Taylor, Chicago, p. 119.

apologetic for its sins, but rather defiant in what it is:

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's
Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them,
for I have seen your painted women under the
gas lamps luring the farm boys.

They tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes,
it is true I have seen the gunmen kill and go
free to kill again.

And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is:
On the faces of women and children I have
seen the marks of wanton hunger. . .

Come, show me another city with lifted head sing-
ing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong
and cunning.

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling
job on job, here is a tall bold slugger set
vivid against the little soft cities. . .¹

A still more revealing poem on the city is Sandburg's
longer and more recent "The Windy City." In it the poet
tells of the origins of the city, of the red-men who gave
it a name and the name of the wild onion Shee-Caw go. He
portrays its people: taxpayers, haberdashers, undertakers,
stiffs, greased manikins, children reading history, men
and women. Next we hear the voices of the city; they
"Jazz the classics" with their quaint phrases: "Bring
home the bacon. . ." "You said a mouthful. . ." "Beat

¹Sandburg, Carl, Chicago Poems, pp. 3-4.

up the short change artists, they never did nothing for you. . ." "You can fix anything if you got the right fixer. . ." "Shoot it all, shoot it all." Then comes the effective, the forceful fifth section, the litany provoked by the city's sins:

Forgive us if the monotonous houses go mile on
mile
Along monotonous streets out to the prairies. . .

If a boy and a girl hunt the sun
With a sieve for sifting smoke. . .

Forgive us if the jazz time beats
Of these clumsy mass shadows
Moan in saxophone undertones
And the footsteps of the jungle
The fang cry, the rip claw hiss,
The sneakup and the still watch
The slant of the slit eyes waiting --
If these bother respectable people
with the right crimp in their napkins
reading breakfast menu cards
forgive us -- let it pass -- let it be.

Forgive us
If boys steal coal in a railroad yard
and run with humped gunnysacks
While a bull picks off one of the kids
And the kid wriggles with an ear in the cinders
And a mother comes to carry home
A bundle, a limp bundle
To have his face washed, for the last time,
Forgive us if it happens -- and happens again
And happens again. . .¹

The spirit of the city lives in these lines "Put the city up; tear the city down; put it up again. . . The city is made, forgotten and made again. . . Every day the

¹Sandburg, Carl, Slabs Of The Sun Burnt West, pp. 3-18.

people sleep and the city dies; every day the people shake loose, awake and build the city again."

"You know my city -- Chicago triumphant", sings Sherwood Anderson in Mid-American Chants. "Factories and marts and the roar of machines -- horrible, terrible, ugly and brutal. Can a singer arise and sing in this smoke and grime? Can he keep his throat clear? Can his courage survive?"

His question is easily answered in the affirmative, for although it may be difficult for birds to live in this smoky atmosphere, writers have been able to celebrate its beauty and its spirit fittingly. Take Anderson's "American Spring Song", for example, or that delightful "Song of the Soul of Chicago" with this opening impression:

On the bridges, on the bridges -- swooping
and rising, whirling and
circling -- back to the bridges,
always the bridges.

On the bridges, on the bridges -- wagons
and motors, horses and men -- not
flying, just tearing along and
swearing. . .

We'll stay down here in the muddy
depths of our stream -- we will. There
can't any poet come out here and
sit on the shaky rail of our ugly
bridges and sing us into paradise.

We're finding out what I want to
say. We'll get at our own thing
out here or die for it. We're
going down, numberless thousands
of us, into ugly oblivion. We
know that.

But say, hards, you keep off our
bridges. Keep out of our dreams,
dreamers. We want to give this
democracy thing they talk so
big about a whirl. We want
to see if we are any good
out here, we Americans from all
over hell. That's what we want.¹

The aspect of the city that Anderson portrays here
is one that is not often seen, but it is familiar enough
to those who have lived there.

Edgar Lee Masters in "The City" is almost Swiftian in
his treatment of the ugly and unconventional. It shows
Chicago's seamy side. This poem will delight some readers,
as its cynicism or realism will offend others:

He saw the city as one great mart
Where life is bought and sold
Men rise to get them meat and bread
To barter for drugs or doffin the dead
And dawn is but a plucked-up heart
For the dreary game of gold. . .

The starving artist sold his youth,
The writer sold his pen;
The lawyer sharpened up his wits
Like a burglar filing auger bits,
And Jusus' vicar sold the truth
To the famished sons of men. . .

The market at night is full of fraud
As the market kept by day.
The courtesan buys a soul with a look,
A dinner tempers the truth in a book,
And love is sold till love is a bawd,
And falsehood froths in the play.

¹Anderson, Sherwood, Mid-American Chants, p. 62.

And men and women sell their smiles
 For friendship's lifeless dregs.
 For fear of the morrow we bend and bow
 To money bags with the slanting brow.
 For the heart that knows life's little wiles
 Seldom or ever begs. . .¹

Literary interpreters of Chicago have seen much significance in the physical characteristics and the geographical significance of the city. Like Petrograd, the city was originally set upon a swamp. Railroad lines run across the continent in all directions wilfully centering on this waste spot. Through these manifold strands, the city touches the world. In The Gospel of Freedom Robert Herrick has this to say regarding the geographical characteristics of the city:

The soil where it emerges from the swamp will grow nothing but scrubby trees and weeds. Man must make all, -- must prepare special foundations for his great buildings; must superimpose good streets of asphalt or brick upon the treacherous bottom; must make green things live, with the cares of a hot-house to delight his eye, for left to herself Nature merely hides the plan with a kind of brown scab. Upon this desolate waste first necessities have been provided for by miles and miles of non-descript, enclosures for business and the requirements of naked existence; and then these last years time has come for ornamentation and individual care, -- for the private house, the boulevard, the park. This last development however is sporadic; hence as a whole the first impression Chicago gives is that of a huge garment made of heterogeneous materials, -- here a square of faded cotton, next door a patch set in of fine silk. For the order of life is first

¹Masters, Edgar Lee, Songs And Satires, pp. 57-64.

existence, then comfort, then luxury, and last -- when the human mind begins to suffer ennui -- a little beauty for a plaything.¹

Chicago is one of the largest cities in the country for the distribution of fresh fruits, vegetables, poultry, butter, eggs and cheese. The following account of that historic square, South Water Street, which supplies food for Chicago's millions is taken from The Pit by Frank Norris. It was written nearly thirty years ago:

Or again, it was South Water Street -- a jam of delivery wagons and market carts backed to the curbs, leaving only a tortuous path between the endless files of horses, suggestive of an actual barrack cavalry. Provisions, market produce, "garden truck", and fruits, in an infinite welter of crates and baskets, boxes and sacks, crowded the side walks. The gutter was choked with an overflow of refuse, cabbage leaves, soft oranges, decaying beet tops. The air was thick with heavy smell of vegetation. Food was trodden under foot, food crammed the stores and warehouses to bursting. The very dray horses were gorged with an unending nourishment of snatched mouthfuls picked from the backboard, from barrel top and from the edge of the side walk. The entire locality reeked with the fatness of a hundred thousand furrows. A land of plenty, the inordinate abundance of the earth itself emptied itself upon the asphalt and cobbles of the quarter. It was the Mouth of the City, drawn from all directions, over a territory of immense area, this glut of crude substance was sucked in, as if into a rapacious gullet, to feed the sinews and to nourish the fibers of an immeasurable colossus.²

The energy of Chicago and the city's rapid growth have appropriately been the theme of many literary compositions.

¹Herrick, Robert, The Gospel of Freedom, p. 101.

²Norris, Frank, The Pit, pp. 61-62.

For example, Eunice Tietjens' interesting descriptive poem "The Steam Shovel" seems a case in point. This modern industrial invention reminds her of a giant of the primal race, but it lacks the spirit and life of these creatures, their impulses and their desires:

Beneath my window in a city street
 A monster leers, a creature huge and grim
 And only half believed: the strength of him --
 Steel-strung and fit to meet
 The strength of earth --
 Is mighty as men's dreams that conquer force.
 Steam belches from him. He is the new birth
 Of old Behemoth, late sprung from the source
 Whence Grendel sprang, and all the monster clan
 Dead for an age, now born again of man. . .

O thwarted monster, born at man's decree,
 A lap-dog dragon, eating from his hand
 And doomed to fetch and carry at command,
 Have you no longing ever to be free?
 In warm, electric days to run amuck,
 Ranging like some mad dinosaur,
 Your fiery heart at war
 With this strange world. . .
 Do you not yearn to rip the roots of stone
 Of these great piles men build,
 And hurl them down with shriek of shattered
 steel,
 Scorning your own sure doom, so you may feel
 You too, the lust with which your fathers killed?¹

Hotels are a much more vital feature of Chicago life than of that of most cities, one of the results of a congested Loop district. Harriet Monroe, editor of Poetry, has sensed this fact, and in her poem "The Hotel" gives one a minute description of the bustling life of the modern Chicago hostelry. But in the confusion of it all she feels

¹Poetry, IV (Sept., 1914), pp. 221-223.

that God is struggling in the souls of the people the hotel shelters:

The long, resounding marble corridors, the
shining parlors with shining women in them.

The French room, with its gilt and garlands
under plump little tumbling painted Loves.

The Turkish room, with its jumble of many
carpets and its stubby, squared un-Turkish
chairs.

The English room, all heavy crimson and gold,
with spreading palms lifted high in round,
green tubs. . . .

The people sitting in corners by twos and
threes, cooing together under the glare. . .

The bell-boys marching in with cards, and
shouting names over and over into ears that
do not heed.

The telephone girls forever listening to far
voices, with the silver band over their hair
and little black caps obliterating their
ears. . .

The waiters in black swallowtails and white
aprons, passing here and there with trays
of bottles and glasses.

The cool cellars filled with meats and fruits,
or layered with sealed and bottled wines
mellowing safely in the darkness.

The invisible stories of furnaces and machines,
burrowing deep down into the earth, where
grimy workmen are heavily laboring. . .¹

The conflict of races adds an element of intensity
to Chicago life and has furnished the theme of not a few

¹Monroe, Harriet and Henderson, Alice, The New Poetry,
pp. 231-233.

literary productions. In particular, the Race Riot of July, 1919, provoked probably the first full expressions of sentiment from Negroes in their own press. In them is a strong note of resentment and the announcement of the birth of a "New Negro." We submit a poem by Claude McKay, as an example. It was first published in the *Crusader* and subsequently in other periodicals.

If We Must Die

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While around us bark the mad and hungry dogs
Making their mock at our accursed lot.

If we must die -- oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us, though dead!

Oh, kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us still be brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-
Blow!

What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly
pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but -- fighting
back! 1

All told then, Chicago is an interesting city, yet one with great areas that are singularly unattractive, but not valueless for literature. It is a beautiful city in long and glorious stretches, yet in its massing of miseries a terribly unhappy place. From the multitude

¹Quoted in The Negro In Chicago, p. 489. This study was published by The Chicago Commission On Race Relations in 1922.

of themes afforded by this varied life, the literary worker has but to make a selection. Accordingly, the poet, the novelist and the writer of sociological essays have all drawn from the rich mass of material that is found here.

Chapter IV

The Proletariat

Bishop Maurice de Tallyrand said long ago "that society is divided into two classes: the shearers and the shorn. We should always be with the former against the latter." An opposing view, however, is taken by some of the authors of Chicago. The very turmoil and brutality of the city, perhaps, has helped to make humanitarians of them.

According to The Chicago Tribune of August 5, 1923, Chicago is the wobbly capital of America. It is the headquarters of the I.W.W.. The Workers' Party, official mouthpiece of the Russian Third International, has moved its offices to Chicago. The Novy Mir, a Russian language paper, the only open champion of Soviets in America, is also moving to Chicago. The Liberator, formerly The Masses, has already moved to Chicago and is now published from 1009 North State Street.¹

Because Chicago is America's "wobbly" capital there is an unusually large element of intellectuals and agitators in its population of drifting men. On the north side of

¹Quoted in Zorbaugh, H.W., The Gold Coast And Slum, p. 114.

the river, in the vicinity of Clark Street, these malcontents have made their headquarters. Their favorite place for setting up their soap boxes is in Washington Square in front of Newberry Library. By day the benches are filled with men reading newspapers, but at night they listen to the impassioned pleas of the agitator.

On the West Side of the city, also, are the regions of poverty and distress though they are not so bad now as they were two decades ago. At that time, or, to be exact, in 1906, Upton Sinclair wrote The Jungle. It was a notable success and is said to have produced more visible results than any other book published. At any rate, it has created legislation and transformed the working conditions of thousands of men and women. The following bit of description is taken from the chapter entitled "The Fertilizer Man":

His labor took him about one minute to learn. Jurgis was given a shovel, and along with half a dozen others it was his task to shovel the fertilizer into carts. That others were at work he knew by the sound, and by the fact that he sometimes collided with them. . . In five minutes he was, of course, a mass of fertilizer from head to feet; they gave him a sponge to tie over his mouth, so that he could breathe, but the sponge did not prevent his lips and eyelids from caking up with it and his ears from filling solid. . .

Working in his shirt-sleeves, and with the thermometer at over a hundred the phosphates soaked through every pore of his skin and in five minutes he had a headache, and in fifteen was almost dazed. The blood was pounding in his brain like an engine throbbing; there was a frightful pain in the top of his skull, and he could hardly control his hands. . .

a man could get used to the fertilizer mill the boss said, if he only would make up his mind to it; but Jurgis now began to see that it was a question of making up his stomach.¹

The Jungle is more than a novel; it is an unconcealed socialistic tract. It seems that the author's sole purpose in writing it was to portray the condition of the working man as compared with that of the man of wealth. The hero, Jurgis, strays into a workers' meeting and hears a socialistic speech:

It was like coming suddenly upon some wild sight of nature -- a mountain forest lashed by a tempest, a ship tossed about upon a stormy sea. Jurgis had an unpleasant sensation, a sense of confusion, of disaster, of wild and meaningless uproar. The man was tall and gaunt, as haggard as his auditor himself; a thin black beard covered half of his face, and one could see only two black hollows, where his eyes were. He was speaking rapidly in great excitement; he used many gestures. . .

"And so you return to your daily round of toil, you go back to be ground up for profits in the world wide mill of economic might! To toil long hours for another's advantage, to live in mean and squalid homes, to work in dangerous and unhealthful places: to wrestle with the spectres of hunger and privation, to take your chances of accident, disease and death; each day you have to toil a little harder and feel the iron hand of circumstance close upon you a little tighter. . .

"For I speak with the voice of the millions who are voiceless! Of them that are oppressed and have no comforter! Of the disinherited of life for whom there is no respite and no deliverance, to whom the world is a prison, a dungeon of torture, a tomb. . ."²

¹Sinclair, Upton, The Jungle, pp. 101-102.

²Ibid., pp. 356-357.

To be compared with The Jungle is The American Family by H.K. Webster. It is a story of labor conditions in Chicago written twelve years later. It tells of the Corbett's who own the machine works at Riverdale, a suburb of the city. "Own" is the word Gregory Corbett used advisedly in speaking of property or workmen. His grandson Hugh has imbibed sociological ideas and is given a free hand to carry them out. The workmen, however, are not satisfied and a great strike develops. Here is an account of that emergency:

A crowd debouched out of a cross street, massed back upon the sidewalks, leaving the roadway clear. Down the streets were lights and cheering. As the procession itself -- if one could call a demonstration so little organized and with so little of rank and file about it by that name -- came in sight. Hugh saw that they were carrying transparencies lettered in red and save for an occasional simple slogan like "Down with wage slavery", generally illegible from an attempt to say too much. He saw occasional red flags. There were sporadic attempts to sing "The Marseillaise", but none of these manifestations impressed Hugh very much. The manifestants were just a trifle shamefaced, self conscious at any rate. The proceeding had a touch of the doctrinaire about it. They intended to be a mob but, somehow they weren't quite.¹

The strike was fomented by Helena Galicz, a professional agitator. She is described as in the center of an immense knot of men -- fifty perhaps -- picked for their great size and strength. She was talking war -- war on the capitalist

¹ Webster, Henry K., The American Family, p. 82.

class -- "the men of whom you had to beg jobs and who gave them to you on their own terms; the men who had control of the government and ran it as they pleased for their own profit."

She continues in this vein:

But this was not to last forever. Some day these sweating workers would awake to their own power. The wheels of industry would all stand still and in that horrifying breathless pause would be heard the voice of labor -- and it would be the voice of the master. "This is the end", it would say to the fat parasites in the easy chair. "Your day is over. You and your wage systems and your profits and the mask of hypocrisy you call the state and try to frighten us with and make us worship, are finished all together. You can learn to work as we do or you can starve as you have starved us. This is a new day and all men are free."¹

A more artistic, if somewhat less detailed handling of the theme of labor conditions is found in Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie. Specifically, this work deals with labor conditions among women. The heroine Carrie leaves her home in Wisconsin and comes to Chicago to make her own way in the world. Although she has youth and beauty, she tramps the streets for weeks before she secures employment in a shoe factory. Here is an account of the conditions she sees about her:

The place smelled of the oil of machines and of new leather -- a combination which added to the

¹Webster, Henry, K., The American Family, p. 82.

stale odors of the building, was not pleasant in cold weather. The floor though regularly swept every evening presented a littered appearance. Not the slightest provision had been made for the comfort of the employees, the idea being that something was gained by giving them little and making the work as hard and as unremunerative as possible. What we know of foot-rests, swivel backed chairs, dining rooms for girls, clean aprons, and curling irons supplied free, and a decent cloak room were unthought of. The wash rooms were disagreeable, crude if not foul places and the whole atmosphere was sordid. . .

All during the long afternoon she thought of the city outside and its imposing show, crowds and fine buildings. By three o'clock she was sure it must be six and by four it seemed as if they had forgotten to note the hour and were letting all work overtime. The foreman became a true ogre, prowling constantly about, keeping her tied down to her miserable task. What she heard of the conversation only made her feel sure that she did not want to make friends with any of these. When six o'clock came she hurried eagerly away, her arms aching and her limbs stiff from sitting in one position.¹

For this grueling labor she was paid the magnificent sum of four dollars and fifty cents a week. After she paid her board but fifty cents remained for clothes, but even this arrangement might have been endured had not sickness appeared. As a result of illness she lost her job and while looking for another position she meets a crude salesman named Drouet who befriends her and sets her up in an establishment in Union Park. Subsequently, she leaves Drouet for another man and moves to New York City.

¹Dreiser, Theodore, Sister Carrie, pp. 41-44.

The conditions as described in Sister Carrie led to a wide spread interest in sociological problems. Jane Addams, the veteran social worker and author, issued in 1912 a monograph on the "white slave" traffic entitled New Conscience And An Ancient Evil. In it she discusses the working conditions in factories, which were perhaps responsible for Carrie's downfall:

Many a working girl at the end of a day is so hysterical and over wrought that her mental balance is plainly disturbed. Hundreds of working girls go directly to bed as soon as they have eaten their suppers. They are too tired to go from home for recreation, too tired to read and often too tired to sleep. A humane forewoman recently said to me as she glanced down the long room in which hundreds of young women, many of them with their shoes beside them, were standing. "I hate to think of all the aching feet on this floor; these girls all have trouble with their feet; some of them spend the entire evening bathing them in hot water." But aching feet are no more common than aching backs and aching heads. The study of industrial diseases has only this year 1912 been begun by the federal authorities, and doubtless as more is known of the nervous and mental effects of over-fatigue, many ¹ moral breakdowns will be traced to this source.

II

Not only sociologists like Miss Addams and novelists like Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair, but poets like Sandburg have appreciated the sorrows of the working people. Sandburg formerly was a working man, himself. One day he received a reporter's assignment to the district back of

¹Addams, Jane, A New Conscience And An Ancient Evil, pp. 73-74.

the Stockyards. It was a miserable place, with dwarfed, misshapen trees, gray houses huddled together, and in them men and women "with hunger-deep eyes, haunted with shadows of hunger hands." At any rate, he found facts that were not in the assignment and they wrung his heart. He gives his impressions in this fashion:

I shall cry over the dead child of a stockyards
hunky.

His job is sweeping blood off the floor.

He gets a dollar seventy cents a day when he
works,

And it's many tubs of blood he shoves out with
a broom day by day.

Now his three year old daughter

Is in a white coffin that cost him a week's wages.

Every Saturday night he will pay the undertaker
fifty cents till the debt is wiped out.

The hunky and his wife and the kids

Cry over the pinched face almost at peace
in the white box.

They remember it was scrawny and ran up high
doctor bills.

They are glad it is gone for the rest of the
family will have more to eat and wear. . . 1

Sandburg is also keenly interested in the conditions of the West Side workers, who toiled in grimy factories with their smoke and dirt. He describes them very sympathetically in "Halsted Street Car":

¹Sandburg, Carl, "The Right To Grief", Chicago Poems, p. 26.

Come you, cartoonists
 Hang on a strap with me here
 At seven in the morning
 On a Halsted Street Car.

Take your pencils
 And draw these faces.

Try with your pencils for these crooked faces,
 That pig-sticker in one corner -- his mouth --
 That overall factory girl -- her loose cheeks.

Find for your pencils
 A way to mark your memory
 Of tired empty faces.

After their night's sleep,
 In the moist dawn
 And cool daybreak,
 Faces
 Tired of wishes,¹
 Empty of dreams.¹

Readers of Knute Hamsun may find him indicated in the following verses by Clifford Franklin Gessler. Hamsun, according to the legend of him, once served as a street car conductor in Chicago. We can imagine his mind busy with themes like these, especially in war times. It is entitled "Van Buren Street Car."

Child with pinched face,
 Boarding the car in the grim winter morning
 As the wind heaps dun masses of dust
 around your slender ankles.

I shall remember you when the iron wind
 Hurls red mist over the barricade
 And strong shoulders go down under a
 sea of iron,
 And there is no relenting.

¹Sandburg, Carl, Chicago Poems, p. 11.

I shall remember and say:
 For this and for thousands like her,
 That there may be for them, joy
 and a tree of rest,
 After the years of toiling, a rose --
 Stand, comrades, a wall of succor! . . . ¹

Another poet of humanitarian cast of mind is Lewis
 Melis, a prominent member of Chicago's hobohemia. The
 following lines from his pen are entitled "The Slave
 Market." He has in mind, of course, the employment
 agencies at West Madison Street:

This is the city of lost dreams and defeated hopes.
 Always you are the Mecca of the Jobless,
 The seekers after life and the sweet illusions
 of happiness.
 Within your walls there are the consuming
 Fires of pain, sorrow and eternal regrets.
 Roses never bloom here; silken petals
 Cannot be defiled. . .

Where slaves of mill and mine and rail and shop
 Curl up and drop away unconscious
 In fair pretence of sleep.
 Employment sharks entrapping men,
 Human vultures in benign disguise,
 Auctioning labor at a pittance per day.
 And its always "What will you give?"
 "What will you take?" . . .

They swarm the city streets, these slaves,
 For all must live and strive
 And always the elusive job sign
 Greets their contemplative glance.
 A job -- food, clothing, shelter;
 Wage slaves selling their power
 Oh, you Slave Market, I know you! . . . ²

¹Gessler, Clifford F., Literary Digest, LXVIII (Feb. 5,
 1921) p. 36.

²Anderson, Nels, The Hobo, pp. 206-207.

In this poem and in others like it by other hands one senses the humanitarian spirit shown by Chicago authors -- a spirit bred by the suffering and turbulence of the city.

Chapter V

The Loop

No part of the city has interested literary writers more consistently than the Loop. This is not to be wondered at because it is in reality the heart of the city. Never in any city was there such a compact segregation of important interests.

The two branches of the Chicago River divide the city into three parts called prosaically the North Side, the South Side, and the West Side. Racially differentiated, the inhabitants of these divisions view one another askance and mingle but little. There is a neutral land, however, where they transact business by day and enjoy themselves by night. This is "The Loop".

Wm. Hobart Chatfield-Taylor in his delightful little series of illustrated sketches, Chicago, thus describes it:

Here a quarter of million people of both sexes are dumped six days in a week by the transportation lines to toil for their daily bread.

A caldron of human endeavor by day, a pleasure spot by night, the Loop is literally as well as metaphorically, the heart of the city. Technically speaking it is the part of our so-called "Business District" enriched by the ugly posts

and girders of the elevated railways. In reality, however, it extends to the lake and river, and as far south as the Blackstone Hotel; for within this area of less than a square mile is found everything material or aesthetic which the inhabitants of our three sides enjoy in common.¹

The close centering of every kind of life within a small area has had an incalculable influence upon the life of the city. With all its interests united within the Loop, the city has grown to strength and power. The business center still stands within a few blocks of where it stood in the earliest days. This holding fast to the old locality has given Chicago much of its stability and made it a city that holds fast to tradition.

Very noticeable also is the Chicago impulse to put itself into print in regard to its own features. This is the way Edgar Lee Masters describes "The Loop" in Songs and Satires. Everything in it seems to be catalogued realistically:

Around the loop the elevated crawls,
And giant shadows sink against the walls
Where ten to twenty stories strive to hold
The pale refraction of the sunset's gold. . .

The clang of car bells and the beat of drums,
Draft horses clamping with their steel-shop
hoofs,
The buildings have grown small and black
and worn,
The sky is more beholden; o'er the roofs

¹Chatfield-Taylor, H.C., Chicago, p.27.

A flock of pigeons soars; with dresses torn
 And yellow faces, labor women pass
 Some Chinese gabbling; and there, buying fruit,
 Stands a fair girl who is a late recruit
 To those poor women slain each year by lust. . .

The railroad tracks are near. We almost choke
 From filth whirled from the street and stinging
 vapors.

Great engines vomit gas and heavy smoke
 Upon a north wind driving tattered papers,
 Dry dung and dust and refuse down the street.

. . . And a man with a jaw
 Set like a tiger's, with a dirty beard,
 Skulks toward the loop, with heavy wrists red-
 raw

Glowing above his pockets where his hands
 Pushed tensely round his hips the coat tails
 draw

And show what seems a slender piece of metal
 In his hip pocket. On these barren strands
 He waits for midnight for old scores to settle
 Against his ancient foe society,
 Who keeps the soup house and who builds
 the jails. . .

Within a little hall a fierce-eyed youth
 Rants of the burdens on the people's backs --
 He would cure all things with a single tax.
 A clergyman demands more gospel truth,
 Speaking to Christians at a weekly dinner.
 A parlor Marxian, for a beginner
 Would take the railways. . .

Outside the stars look down. Stars are content
 To be so quiet and indifferent.¹

II

Naturally, where business of every kind is so congested there are often busy street scenes. Chicagoans love to point with pride to the intersection of State and Madison Streets as "the most crowded corner of the

¹Masters, Edgar Lee, Songs and Satires, pp. 32-39.

world." Near here we find "The Fair" department store so realistically described in Theodore Dreiser's novel Sister Carrie. Although his account was written in 1902, the store remains practically unchanged today. He characterizes "The Fair" as a handsome bustling store, with a host of clerks and a swarm of patrons. As Carrie passed along the aisles she was much affected by the displays of dress goods, stationery and jewelry:

There was nothing there which she could not have used -- nothing which she did not long to own. The dainty slippers and stockings, the delicately frilled skirts and petticoats, the laces, ribbons, hair-combs, purses all touched her with individual desire, and she felt keenly the fact that not any of these things were within the range of her purchase. She was a work-seeker, an outcast without employment, one whom the average employee could tell at a glance was poor and in need of a situation.¹

As Carrie was looking for work, she inquired for the managerial offices. There she found other girls ahead of her, applicants like herself. After a wait of perhaps three quarters of an hour she was called in turn:

"Now", said a sharp, quick-mannered Jew, who was sitting at a roll-top desk near the window, "have you ever worked in any other store?"

"No, sir", said Carrie.

"Oh, you haven't", he said, eyeing her keenly.

"No, sir", she replied.

¹Dreiser, Theodore, Sister Carrie, p.24.

"Well, we prefer young women just now with some experience. I guess we can't use you."¹

And so the interview terminated. Carrie was so tired and nervous that she abandoned the thought of applying at other stores and sought safety in the street.

To be compared with this is Robert Herrick's masterful study of life at Marshall Field's as revealed in The Common Lot. Although it was written years ago, it typifies fairly well conditions obtaining at the present time. Certainly, no study of present day society is more searching in its analyses of the effect of commercial ideals on character. Mrs. Jackson Hart visits the store on a shopping tour:

She hurried hither and thither in the nervous perturbation of buying. Finally she had to mount to the third floor to have a correction made in her account. There, in the center of the building, nearly an acre of floor space was railed off for the office force, -- the book-keepers and tally clerks and cashiers. Near the main aisle thirty or forty girls were engaged in stamping little yellow slips. Each had a computation machine before her and a pile of slips. Now and then some girl would glance up listlessly from her work, let her eyes wander vacantly over the vast floor, and perhaps settle her gaze for a moment on the face of the lady who was waiting before the cashier's window. . .

Helen was hypnotized by the constant punch, click, and clatter of the computation machines, the repeated movements of the girl's arms as

¹Dreiser, Theodore, Sister Carrie, p. 24.

she stretched out for fresh slips, inserted them in the machines and laid them aside. This was the labor of the great industrial world, -- constant, rhythmic as a machine is rhythmic, deadening to soul and body.¹

Yet this store boasts of the character of its employees. They are neater, more intelligent and better paid than those of other stores. But, here as elsewhere, they had the characteristic marks of dull wholesale labor.

Maxwell Bodenheim also, uses the theme of the department store ten years later in Poetry. He, without doubt, is an ultra-radical among the poets. At any rate, he does not believe in telling lyrical lies about human beings in order to alleviate the nightmare of working conditions. The poem is called "The Department Store."

This squinting, moon-faced man is measuring
lavender silk
For a muffled, little-eyed girl.
(Only the counter lies between them, but
they do not see each other.)

This waxen-lipped girl, whose eyes are like
burning silk,
Is selling a frilled white waist
To a sleepy-faced old woman in flaring clothes.
(They are both secretly amused.)

And this middle-aged, iron-bodied woman is
wrapping candy
For a fat, delicate-faced man in black clothes.
Rarely do they peep above the low wall between
them
To look upon each other.²

¹Herrick, Robert, The Common Lot, pp. 183-184.

²Poetry, VIII (May, 1916), p. 75.

Even the five and ten cent stores of the Loop interest Chicago authors. Ben Hecht, for example, has written a very interesting sketch entitled "Ten-Cent Wedding Rings." Here are a few extracts:

Egad, what a masterly scene! A kitchen Coney Island. A puzzle, pictures of isles, signs, smells, noises. Cinderella wandering wistfully in the gloss bead section looking for a fairy godmother.

A clinking obligato by the cash registers. The poor are buying gifts. This garish froth of merchandise is the back-ground of their luxuries. This noisy puzzle-picture store is their horn of plenty. . .

Perhaps the jazz-song booster singing out of the side of his mouth with tired eyes leering at the crowd of girls: "Won't You Let Me Love You, If I Promise To Be Good?" and "Love Me, Turtle Dove", and "Lovin' Looie", and "The Lovin' Blues."

All lovin'. Jazz songs, ballads, sad, silly boobish nut songs -- all about love me -- love me. All about stars and kisses, moonlight and "she took my man away." There are telephones all over the walls and the song-booster's voice pops out over the salted peanut section, over the safety-pin and brassware section. A tiny nasal voice with a whine and a hoarseness almost hiding the words.

The cash register's clink, clink. "Are you waited on, Madam? Five cents a package, Madam." The crowds tired eyed shabbily dressed: bundle-laden, young, old -- the crowds shuffle up and down, staring at gewgaws, and the love-me love songs follow them around. Follow them to the loose-bead counter where Madge with her Japanese puffs of hair, her wad of gum and her black shirt-waist that she keeps straightening out continually by drawing up her bosom and pressing down on her hips with her hands -- where Madge holds forth.¹

¹Hecht, Ben, 1001 Afternoons In Chicago, pp. 115-119.

In the meantime, the grim-faced crowds shuffle by under the glare of the electric signs. And Christmas is coming. A vague gray snow trickles out of the gloom.

III

Another interesting sight to the man of letters is La Salle Street, the home of the financial district. The Board of Trade building at the very edge of La Salle Street, on West Jackson Boulevard is not in keeping with the wealth and dignity of the banking and commercial buildings. What makes it notable, however, is that it holds the Wheat Pit, so vividly described in Frank Norris' novel of that name. It is not a sunken amphitheatre, as one might imagine, but a vast enclosure on the second floor. There one sees a big open hall filled with masses of excited men. One hears a roar of sound, the rumbling of human voices rising and falling, only to break into greater and more vociferous noise. The following description is by Norris:

Bare-headed young men hurried up to one another, conferred an instant comparing dispatches, then separated, darting away at top speed. Over by the bulletin boards clerks and agents made careful memoranda of primary receipts and noted down the amount of wheat in passage, the exports and the imports.

And all these sounds, the chatter of the telegraph, the intoning of the messenger boys, the shouts and cries of clerks and traders, the shuffle and tramping of hundreds of feet, the whining of telephone signals rose into the troubled air, and

mingled overhead to form a vast note, prolonged, sustained, that reverberated from vault to vault of the airy roof in the long roll of uninterrupted thunder.¹

The leading character, Curtis Jadwin, is a venture-some speculator in whom one finds much of the daring and ceaseless energy of Chicago itself. He fidgets in idleness: tries books, the theatre, but all in vain. These things do not satisfy him and he goes back to meet his Waterloo. Here is the way it is described:

Jadwin was in the thick of the confusion by now, he heard nothing else. The wheat had broken from his control. For months he had by the might of his single arm, held it back; but now it rose like the upbuilding of a colossal billow. It lowered, towered, hung poised for an instant, and then, with a thunder as of the grind and crash of chaotic worlds, broke upon him, burst through the Pit and raced past him and on to the eastward and to the hungry nations. . .

Then under the stress and violence of the hour something snapped in his brain. The murk behind his eyes had been suddenly pierced by a white flash. The strange qualms of the last few months culminated in some indefinite crisis, and the wheels and cogs of all activities save one lapsed away and ceased. Only one function of the complicated machine persisted but it moved with a rapidity of vibration that seemed to be tearing the tissues of being to shreds while its rhythm beat out the old and terrible cadence:

"Wheat - wheat - wheat - wheat - wheat - wheat."²

Stripped of its accessories, such is the story. Not

¹Norris, Frank, The Pit, p. 98.

²Ibid., p. 392.

only does the lure of the wheat pit get hold of Jadwin but something of the spirit of the city as well. Its restlessness urges him on, its challenge is forever cutting him, for the wheat pit is in itself the very essence of the heart and soul of Chicago.

Another vivid treatment of the commercial spirit of Chicago is found in George Horace Lorimer's Old Gorgon Graham. The old packer also takes a flier out of the Stock Exchange. He becomes a bear in Prime Steam Lard when it stood at eight cents and plenty of pork in sight. This is the way he tells it:

Somehow after we had gone short a big line, the law of supply and demand quit business. There were plenty of hogs out West and the packers were making plenty of lard, but people seemed to be frying everything they ate, and using lard in place of hair-oil, for Prime Steam moved out as fast as it was made. The market simply sucked up our short sales and hollered for more, like a six-months shoat at the trough. . .¹

As soon as 'change closed for the day Graham and his associates wired their agents "to start anything that looked like a hog towards Chicago." They also ordered their men in the East to ship them every tierce of lard they could lay their hands on. Then came the final play off with the bull crowd.

¹Lorimer, George H., Old Gorgon Graham, pp. 119-122.

We'd had inspectors busy all night passing the lard which we had gathered together and which was arriving by boatloads and trainloads. Then, before 'change opened we passed the word around through our brokers that there wasn't any big short interest left. . . . By the time the bell rang for trading on the floor we had built the hottest sort of a fire under the market, and thirty minutes after the opening the price of November option had melted down flat to twelve cents.

We gave the bulls a breathing space there, for we knew we had them all nicely rounded up in the killing-pens, and there was no hurry. But on towards noon, when things looked about right, we jumped twenty brokers into the pit, all selling at once and offering in any sized lots for which they could find takers. It was like setting off a pack of firecrackers -- biff! bang! bang! our brokers gave it to them, and when the smoke cleared away the bits of that busted corner were scattered all over the pit, and there was nothing left for us to do but pick up our profits; for we had swung a loss of millions over to the other side of the ledger.¹

Do you get the point of view? Old Gorgon Graham is the epitome of the American, or more particularly the Chicagoan common sense or practicality. You may depend upon it that he never went into the market unless he had the goods or knew where to get them.

IV

There is a dramatic strength in the aspect of the buildings of the Loop. Numberless white marble structures now tower heavenward and the blue sky seems to be the limit. Chicago is immensely proud of the fact that it was the first city to begin steel framework structures, the factor

¹Norris, Frank, The Pit, p. 173.

which made lofty buildings possible.

In his poem "The Skyscraper" Carl Sandburg does not look upon them merely as a pile of countless stories one above the other. Instead, he views them as arteries of the city through which flow its joys and sorrows as they come and go by wire and letter. The buildings, too, are humanized in the making. They are founded upon toil and the spirit of the men who sank their foundations:

By day the skyscraper looms in the smoke and sun
and has a soul,

Prairie and valley, streets of the city, pour
people into it and they mingle among its twenty
floors and are poured out again back to the
streets, prairies and valleys. . .

Elevators slide on their cables and tubes catch
letters and parcels and iron pipes carry gas
and water in sewage out.

Wires climb with secrets, carry light and carry
words, and tell terrors and loves -- curses of
men grappling plans of business and questions
of women in plots of love. . .

Men who laid the pilings and mixed the mortar
are laid in graves where the wind whistles
a wild song without words

And so are the men who strung the wires and
fixed the pipes and tubes and those who saw
it rise floor by floor.

Souls of them all are here, even the hod carrier
begging at back doors hundreds of miles away
and the bricklayer who went to state's prison
for shooting another man while drunk. . .

Darkness on the hallways. Voices echo. Silence
holds. . . Watchmen walk slow from floor to
floor and try the doors. Revolvers bulge from
their hip pockets. . . Steel safes stand in the

corners. Money is stacked in them.

A young watchman leans at a window and sees the lights of barges butting their way across a harbor, nets of red and white lanterns in a railroad yard, and a span of glooms splashed with lines of white and blurs of crosses and clusters over the sleeping city. . .¹

Another expressive treatment of the Loop district is found in some verse by Clifford Franklin Gessler, a former Chicago poet. It is called "Loop, Morning" and may well be used as a conclusion for this section:

Day rides into the Loop
With shrieking of iron wheels,
Staccato of leathern heels
And the mist over all.

Chicago flows into the Loop
In the half light of the pale sun,
To the tasks that are never done
And the gray weariness.²

¹Sandburg, Carl, Chicago Poems, pp. 65-67.

²Literary Digest, LXVIII (Feb. 5, 1921), p. 36.

Chapter VI

The Lake Shore

Along with the glories of the Loop district, Chicago authors have been impressed with the beauties of the Lake Front. Lake Michigan naturally plays an important part in the life of the city because of its location. The homes and business blocks look off into its watery spaces, and its waves come tumbling at her very feet. From the windows of the skyscrapers one may look at water and sky of ever-changing colors, at a lake all blue under the bluest of skies, at a lake of dazzling white and green. After the sun has set one may watch the shifting, weird, uncanny colors till darkness deepens all into one black mass. All told, the effect upon the senses is wonderfully impressive.

Among those who have been influenced by the beauties of the Lake Front is Carl Sandburg, the poet laureate of the city. "Lost" is one of his most exquisite lyrics and is found in his Chicago Poems. In its musical setting it brings one face to face with the fog, the steamer whistle out on the Lake, and the divine unrest in life itself:

Desolate and alone,
 All night long on the lake,
 Where fog trails and mist creeps,
 The whistle of a boat
 Calls and cries unendingly,
 Like some lost child
 In tears and trouble,
 Seeking the harbor's breast
 And the harbor's eyes.¹

Another bit of verse in the same volume is very expressive also. In "The Harbor" one does not fail to see the city's "huddled and ugly walls" but even in their presence he comes with the turn of a corner, upon "a blue burst of lake" suggesting romance:

Passing through huddled and ugly walls
 By doorways where women
 Looked from their hunger-deep eyes,
 Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
 Out from the huddled and ugly walls,
 I came sudden, at the city's edge,
 On a blue burst of lake,
 Long lake waves breaking under the sun
 On a spray-flung curve of shore;
 And a fluttering storm of gulls,
 Masses of great gray wings
 And flying white bellies
 Veering and wheeling free in the open.²

Best of all Sandburg's verse on the Lake, however, is his well known little poetic gem "Fog". This represents Sandburg's quieter manner at its best:

The Fog comes
 On little cat feet.

¹Sandburg, Carl, Chicago Poems, p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 8.

It sits looking
 Over harbor and city
 On silent haunches
 And then moves on. 1

Hamlin Garland was also fascinated by the beauty of the Lake's turbulent waters. In Rose of Dutchers Coolly, the distracted heroine went to it often because it rested her from the noise of grinding wheels and yells:

She cried out with sudden joy for she had never seen the lake more beautiful. Near the shore a great mass of churned and heaving ice and snow lay like a robe of shaggy fur. Beyond this the deep water spread a vivid pea-green, broken by wide, irregular strips of dark purple. In the open water by the wall a spatter of steel-blue lay like the petals of some strange flower, scattered upon the green. . .

It had other moods, this mighty spread of water. It could be angry, dangerous. Sometimes it rolled sullenly, convoluting in oily surges beneath its coverlid of snow, like a bed of monstrous serpents. Sometimes the leaden sky shut down over it, and from the desolate northeast a snow storm rushed, hissing and howling. Sometimes it slumbered for days, quiet as a sleeping boa, then awake and was a presence and a voice in the night, fit to make the hardest tremble.²

Chicago has been called the "Windy City" by some of its detractors, but not altogether on account of the winds that prevail there. Boastfulness, however, is not its chief characteristic, but rather the energetic desire to be up and doing. Chatfield-Taylor in his volume Chicago

1Sandburg, Carl, Chicago Poems, p. 71.

2Garland, Hamlin, Rose of Dutchers Coolly, p. 294.

says that:

The microbe of the "Chicago Spirit" as this forcible element of its soul is fondly called is disseminated, I firmly believe by the breezes of Lake Michigan; for while it is possible to lead a tranquil or even complacent existence in other places, no sooner does one sniff the air of Chicago than life becomes a turmoil of duty, every waking hour of which is burdened by some obligation which must be fulfilled before night-fall, the word manana having no place in our vocabulary.¹

Projecting out into the Lake at the foot of Grand Avenue is one of the achievements of which Chicago is most proud. The new "Municipal Pier" is said to be "the most comprehensive municipal recreation pier in the world, providing free concerts, entertainments under ideal conditions for millions annually."² At any rate, Edgar Lee Masters finds it an inspiring sight and describes it in his characteristic manner. Incidentally, he retells the story of the growth of Chicago.

The Municipal Pier

Great snail whose lofty horns are knobbed with gold
Long javelin of red-wood lying straight
Upon the changing indigoes which unfold
In blues and chrysophrases from the gate
Of this our city sea-ward, till the gull
Becomes a gnat where light annihilate
The wings' last beat. . .

Continuing the story he next points out some of its

¹Chatfield-Taylor, H.C., Chicago, p. 117.

²Thompson, W.H., Chicago: Eight Years Of Progress, p. 142.

³Masters, Edgar Lee, Selected Poems, p. 117.

commercial uses:

Telling the story
That grows within the Loop, its dens and booths,
And palaces of trade, is to omit
The city's lofty genius, and the truths
Through which she works at best, against the wit
Of creatures who would sell her body, take
The money of the sale as perquisite
For grossness in luxurious life. Awake
Themistocles of us and carve the dream
Of Burnham into stone! Along this lake
Such as no city looks on, to redeem
Its shores from shrieks and crashes, refuse, smoke.
His architectural vision sketched the scheme
Of harbors, islands, boulevards -- he speaks
For these, the concourse, stadium and a tomb
For that infamy of filth whose cloak
Is law, hiding the greedy hands that doom
To long delay and bribery.¹

II

Mr. Burnham just referred to was none other than the renowned architect, Daniel H. Burnham, one of the sponsors of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. A few years after the World's Fair, he said at a banquet: "A very high purpose will be served if the lake shore be restored to the people and made beautiful for them." Continuing his speech, he grew lyrical and also prophetic:

The lake has been singing to us many years, until we have become responsive. We see the broad water ruffled by the gentle breeze; upon its breast the glint of oars, the gleam of rosy sails, the outlines of swift gliding launches. We see racing shells go by, urged onward by bronzed athletes. We hear the rippling of the waves, commingled with youthful

¹Masters, Edgar Lee, Selected Poems, pp. 118-119.

laughter, and music swelling over the Lagoon dies away under the low branches of the trees. A crescent moon swims in the western sky, shining faintly upon us in the deepening twilight. . .

And what sort of prosperity is this we should foster and maintain? Not that for rich people solely or principally, for they can take care of themselves and wander where they will in pursuit of happiness: but the prosperity of those who must have employment in order to live.¹

The outcome of this dream of Burnham was the famous Chicago Plan of 1901. Space does not permit a detailed account here but the central idea is as follows: If Chicago is to become the most attractive city of this continent, its development should be guided along certain prearranged lines, to the end that the necessary expenditures for public improvement may serve not only the purposes of the moment but also the needs of the future. Paris has been made the world's most beautiful city because she has followed for more than fifty years the policy of making public improvements in conformity with some clearly defined plan. Chicago proposes to follow her example.

III

Michigan Avenue, or "Boul Mich" as the Chicagoans lovingly call it, is a sight which poets and novelists have gloried in as it is in reality the show place of

¹Lewis, Lloyd and Smith, H.J., Chicago, p. 313.

the city. If one stands on the south veranda of the Art Institute, he can see the life of this modern boulevard, rich, organized, confident; and he can look up at the tiers of skyscraper windows, behind each collection of which cities-within-cities do their work with a precision that amounts to monotony.

Michigan Avenue is dedicated to the unreal life of the majority of Chicagoans. It is their world of make-believe -- their life of secret grandeurs which compensates for the monotony of the work-a-day world. Ben Hecht visited it one afternoon while on a newspaper assignment. Here is what he wrote:

This street, I begin to understand, is consecrated to the unrealities so precious to us. We come here for a little while to allow our dreams to peer timorously at life. In the street west of here we are what we are -- browbeaten, wearyeyed, terribly optimistic units of the boobilariat. Our secret characterizations we hide desperately from the frowns of windows and the squeal of "L" trains.

But here in this Circe of Streets the sun warms us, the sky and the spaces of shining air lure us and we step furtively out of ourselves. And give us ten minutes. Observe -- a street of heroes and heroines. Actors all. Great and irresistible egoists. Do we want riches? Then we have only to raise our finger. Slaves will attend us with sesterces and dinars. A street of joyous Caligulas and Neros, with here and there a Ghengis Khan, an Attila.

The high buildings waver like gray and golden ferns in the sun. The sky stretches itself in a holiday awning over our heads. A breeze coming from the lake brings an odorous spice into our noses. Adventure and romance. Yes -- and observe how unnecessary are plots. Here in this Circe of streets are all the plots. All the great triumphs, assassinations, amorous contests of history unravel themselves within a distance of five blocks. The great moments of the

world live themselves over again in a silent make-believe.¹

As it is one of the main arteries of the city, the Boulevard is a very busy place in the morning. Art Smith, in a recent poem, describes it stripped of its masquerade of leisure and complacency. The city is going to work. The title is "Early Boul Mich."

We are all going up
All going down
In the canyon of the morning --
Moving, moving in the canyon of deep mists
Black mists low, grey mists high
And faint gold mists way up . . .
Going to work
In the quick fantastic morning
Between high walls with bleary yellow eyes.

We are going along the brisk happy high-line
Of life
Creating a life
Cheating a life

Oh, the morning between high buildings
Where the river runs below
And the pigeons swirl above
And the taxi chains clink-clank
And the smoke of a cigarette
Pours over a shoulder with a swift blue dream
Beautiful passing insanities
Caught for a moment of life
We live -- we move -- and we are dead. . .²

No description of Michigan Boulevard is complete without mention of the Art Institute. It stands between the avenue and the water's edge, a building of dark-mellowed stone, with a broad-stairwayed entrance and lions of bronze.

¹Hecht, Ben, "Michigan Avenue", 1001 Afternoons In Chicago, pp. 33-34.

²Poetry, XXVIII (July, 1926), pp. 202-203.

It is a vital part of the city's daily life. Each year more than a million people enter its doors. In So Big, "Dirk" Strong visits the night school in company with "Dallas", an art student:

She turned into a small, cruelly bright, breathlessly hot little room, its walls whitewashed. Every inch of the floor space was covered with easels. Before them stood men and women, brushes in hand, intent. Dallas went directly to her place, fell to work at once. Dirk blinked in the strong light. He glanced at the dais toward which they were all gazing from time to time as they worked. On it lay a nude woman.

To himself Dirk said in a kind of a panic: "Why, say, she hasn't got any clothes on! My gosh! this is fierce. She hasn't got anything on!" He tried meanwhile, to look easy, careless, critical. Strangely enough, he succeeded after the first shock, not only in looking at ease, but feeling so. The class was doing the whole figure in oils. . . .¹

Here follows some realistic description of Michigan Boulevard at night:

It was after eleven when they emerged from the Art Institute doorway and stood a moment at the top of the broad steps surveying the world that lay before them. Dallas said nothing. Suddenly the beauty of the night rushed up and overwhelmed Dirk. At the right the white tower of the Wrigley Building rose wraithlike against a background of purple sky. Just this side of it a swarm of impish, electric lights grinned their message in scarlet and white. In white:

TRADE AT

then blackness, while you waited against your will.

¹Ferber, Edna, So Big, pp. 337-338.

In red:

THE FAIR

Blackness again. Then in a burst of both colors, in bigger letters, and in a blaze that hurled itself at your eyeballs, momentarily shutting out tower, sky and street:

SAVE MONEY

Straight ahead the hut of the Adams Street L station in midair was a Venetian bridge with the black canal of asphalt flowing sluggishly beneath. The reflection of cafeteria and cigar-shops windows on either side were slender shafts of light along the canal. An enchanting sight. Dirk thought suddenly that Dallas was a good deal like that -- like Chicago. A mixture of grandeur and cheapness: of tawdriness and magnificence, of splendour and ugliness.¹

IV

Still another section of the city made much of by literary men and women is that strip of the Lake Shore Drive between the Drake Hotel and Lincoln Park, or the quiet, aristocratic streets immediately behind it. Here is the greatest concentration of wealth in Chicago. Here live a large number of those who have achieved distinction in industry, in science or in the arts. In this region there is so much of wealth, and so much of the beauty of living that comes from the lavish expenditure of money, that the name of "The Gold Coast" has been aptly given to it. And so happy and charming a region it is that one

¹Ferber, Edna, *So Big*, pp. 339-340.

feels that here, if anywhere, "they fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world."

Professor Harvey Zorbaugh's excellent study of the Near North Side, Gold Coast And Slum, is proof that a scientific treatment of social phenomena is possible and interesting. The locality under consideration is the home of Chicago's "Four Hundred." Here is the way they are described by one of their number:

The Four Hundred are those who have arrived. They form a self-conscious group. They have mores of their own and the amenities of life are of enormous importance in their lives. To violate the social code is a vastly greater sin than to violate the Ten Commandments. A gentleman may drink, he may gamble, but under no circumstances may he appear at an afternoon tea in a morning coat, or at dinner without an evening jacket. . . The Four Hundred have their own papers, they have their own clubs. They live in a totally different world from that of the rest of the city of which they are a part. Within this world they lead a life of kaleidoscopic activity, centering about the fashionable hotels along the Drive, "pet charities", the golf club, and the bridle path to say nothing of bridge and dinner table, with occasional trips to La Salle Street. ¹

But this new "society" is no longer based on hereditary social position as it was a generation ago. It is now a society of cliques and sets, of wealth and display, and above all, of youth:

Society [writes a member of one of Chicago's

¹Zorbaugh, Harvey, Gold Coast And Slum, p. 46.

oldest families] has no leaders such as it used to have -- gracious, charming, genuinely hospitable women. These women were real leaders. To-day Chicago socially is in the hands of young people -- cliques of very rich young people. The pace is so fast, competition so keen, that in practically all the smart cliques there is no one left of the type who is there because of good family, personal charm and culture. These people must live up to the standards of the day -- dress smartly, attend smart functions, entertain smartly and often -- or they will be forgotten; and it doesn't take long to forget.¹

Among the most entertaining parts of Professor Zorbaugh's book are several documents anonymously contributed by "Gold Coast" residents. From these we learn of the hotels one may patronize, the invitation one must not refuse, the "events" of the season, the right charities to assist -- in fact, the whole art of climbing. And the game becomes so complex that it may require the entire time of a social secretary. One of the wealthiest women in Chicago has a calling list of two thousand names of those with whom she must be in touch to keep in the game. Savoir faire is a valuable social asset in Chicago as elsewhere, as one lady puts it:

The manner habitual must be self-possessed: there must be an air of well-being and success. Graciousness in readily adjusted degrees, which at one degree warms and at another cools the recipient, is indispensable. An air of complete self-confidence, of easy assurance, with an occasional glint of hauteur, is requisite to social success.²

¹Zorbaugh, Harvey, Gold Coast And Slum, p. 46.

²Ibid., p. 61.

Placid old Lake Michigan, then, still remains the greatest asset of the city. The Lake Front, also, has been developed and restored to the people, especially those who "must have daily employment in order to live." All told, then, this region is the most beautiful in the city, and one that has called forth from the writers of Chicago their most enthusiastic expressions.

Chapter VII

The University

From its very inception, the University of Chicago has been a much discussed institution. Setting out as it did not only to rival other Western colleges but also to put itself abreast of Yale, Harvard, and Princeton, its founders had their work cut out for them. There was no reason for its existence as just another institution of learning. It must be outstanding or nothing.

Accordingly, in 1892 its revolutionary manifestoes burst like bombs in the educational world. The West received them with amazement and the East with amusement. But the amazement soon changed into admiration and the amusement into trepidation. Very few of the famous innovations that stood the educational world on its head have been discontinued. Instead, other like institutions have copied the greater part of them.

Among the severest critics of the University has been one of its former Professors, Robert Herrick. His novel Chimes is a spirited satire on the members of the Faculty and the aims of the institution. Typical of the spirit of the book is that reflected in the following ironical account of Doctor William Rainey Harper, its first

president:

President Harris' shoes had not been shined for days and showed traces of campus mud. They were of soft leather with elastic sides, a kind of shoe one should not wear outside his bedroom. Also, his trousers were too short, with curling frayed bottoms, and they bagged at the chubby knees. His new black frock coat was plentifully sprinkled with dust and dandruff, and down the black ministerial waist coat there was a visible stain possibly from coffee drip. . .

That round smooth face, framed in gold spectacles, beneath a tousled mop of black hair, was both wistful and grave -- and just now evidently contrite. The soft lips covered a firm chin which had the grip of pure will. A short thick neck joined this head to a stout loose trunk. It was not a delicate body, spare and lean as the scholar's should be, but powerful with the fleshiness of the "corn-fed" American. . .

Dr. Harris had tipped back in his swivel chair, exposing a soiled white sock, garterless; his fat short legs stretched his trousers out of shape, while his hands were clasped behind his head. The fingers he noted were short and thick, not the hand of an artist; the square nails were grimy, -- in fact the president proceeded to clean them with his pen knife as he talked. . .¹

A still harsher critic of the University is Upton Sinclair, whose reputation as an author was made in Chicago. He finds himself out of sympathy with "The University of Standard Oil", as he calls it. He does not like its President nor its Faculty. He even finds fault with its celebrated Gothic architecture. The following caustic comment concerning the latter is taken from his interesting study of American Education, The Goose-Step:

¹Herrick, Robert, Chimes, pp. 3-4.

A thousand years ago, you understand, men rode over the earth, clad in heavy armour, like hard-shell crabs. Every joint had to be lightly covered, lest a flying arrow should pierce the crack; and when they built themselves homes they were moved by this same terror of swift arrows, so they made the windows narrow and deep. They built the walls of thick stone to withstand the pounding of battering-rams, and to hold up the enormous weight of the pile. Such was the origin of "Gothic" architecture; and I do not know any better way to expose to you the elaborate system of buncombe which is called "higher education", than to state that here in twentieth century America, where we know of bows and arrows only in poetry, and have the materials and the skill to build structures of steel and glass, big and airy and light as day -- we deliberately go and reproduce the architectural monstrosities, the intellectual and spiritual deformities of a thousand years ago, and compel modern chemists and biologists and engineers to do their research work by artificial light, for fear of arrows which ceased to fly when the last Indian was penned up on the reservation.¹

Still another critic is Thorstein Veblen, whose earlier writings once brought a good deal of credit to the University. In his book, The Higher Learning In America, he tells of an incident which happened in a certain laboratory "dedicated to one of the branches of biological science." Having been for ten years a professor at the University, Mr. Veblen felt under the necessity of withholding names. Old students of the University, however, know that the incident referred to occurred in the Hull Biological Laboratory.

This building was supposed to be ventilated by a hot air system. Fresh air was taken in from the outside, warmed over steam coils and distributed throughout the

¹Sinclair, Upton, The Goose-Step, p. 242.

building.

It began to be noted that members of the faculty were mysteriously falling sick. They would be forced to stay at home or take a vacation before they got well. Finally one member of the staff went rooting about the basement and made the discovery that the university authorities, in order to save the cost of heating, had boarded up the outside intake so that the air which passed over the coils was being derived in great part from a man-hole leading to a sewer. In other words the great capitalist university had found it too costly to heat its Gothic halls -- playfully described by Veblen as "heavy ceiled, ill-lighted lobbies, which might have served as a mustering place for a body of unruly men at arms, but which mean nothing more to the point today than so many inconvenient flag-stones to be crossed in coming and going." ¹

As opposed to the strictures of Herrick, Sinclair and others, one finds an occasional treatment of the University that is decidedly more favorable. Some authors have found it to be notable for its mental alertness and for the cosmopolitan atmosphere of its campus. From the outset it was hospitable to all sorts and conditions of men and as many varieties of women. It met the earnest

¹Veblen, Thorstein, The Higher Learning In America, p. 145.

student halfway. It was also less worried than some institutions over the status of its unclassified students. Edna Ferber, in her sociological novel, So Big, gives this description of the latter:

The unclassifieds were made up for the most part of earnest and rather middle-aged students whose education was a delayed blooming. They usually were not enrolled for a full course or were taking double work feverishly. . . . If it had been physically possible they would have attended two at once, listened to two lectures, prepared two papers simultaneously. Drab and earnest women between thirty and forty-eight, their hair not an ornament, but something to be pinned up quickly out of the way, their clothes a covering, their shoes not even smartly "sensible" but just shoes, scruffed, patched, utilitarian. . . .

The men were serious, shabby, often spectacled; dandruff on their coat collars; their lined, anxious faces in curious contrast to the fresh, boyish, care-free countenances of the classifieds. Most of them had worked ten and fifteen years for this deferred schooling. This one had to support a mother; that one a family of younger brothers and sisters. This plump woman of thirty-nine, with the jolly kindly face, had a paralyzed father. Another had known merely poverty, grinding sordid poverty, with fifteen years of painful penny savings to bring true this gloriously realized dream of a university education. . . .¹

II

Commentary on the University is found not only in prose but occasionally in verse. With the establishment of the John Billings Fiske Prize in Poetry in 1919, a flood of student verse on University life and various other subjects began to appear.

¹Ferber, Edna, So Big, pp. 228-229.

Among the winners of the Fiske Prize since its establishment is Stanley S. Newman, whose two poems which follow illustrate the kind of use University students are making of the material afforded them by class room and teacher:

A Gray Teacher

Let his words tumble
Into your ears with a waterfall's rumble.

Let his words rush
And run into your mind with a river's hush.

Quickly, quickly, hear his words come.

For soon the lips are numb;
Soon the eyes are dumb;
Soon the words in his skull will slumber
Years without number.¹

Scientist

He walked in dark oblivion
Where he had never seen the sun.

Then down came the hard white light
Like showering manna in the night.

His senses ate of this new blessing.
Each stone and tree for new possessing
Was made apparent to his sight.

Here was a room he could explore
Where questions never shook the door,
He saw all that there was to see.

But he had come from mystery.

¹The University Record, XIII (April, 1927), p. 304.

And soon he left his pale room
 To wander down the corridor
 Of endless night,
 Where sounds he never heard before
 Rocked in the gloom,
 And sudden blossoms sprang to bloom
 Glowing white.¹

Of the older students who have attended the University perhaps none is more illustrious than Howard Mumford Jones, who is now an active college teacher. His poem "The Professor Muses" expresses something of the spiritual sensitivity, the intellectual alertness, which is said to be so characteristic of the University:

This lecture hall is oddly like a mouth --
 Myself the tongue in it, myself the voice,
 Shri!ll, thin across the empty chairs -- how queer,
 How skeleton-like appear these empty chairs!
 Blank walls, bland platform (ineffectual things)
 And bleak, bare windows where the startled day
 On tiptoe stands, too lovely to come in. . .
 A mouth it seems, a maw, huge, grim, slow, sure
 Some day to close and crush me! . . .

And presently
 A gong will ring here like a doomsday bell
 And through these doors, like winds that shake
 the woods,
 Sons of the wind and daughters of the dawn,
 Eternal, joyous, unafraid, comes youth:
 Youth from a million colored realms of joy,
 Youth storming up the world with flying hair,
 And laughter like a rose-red deluge spilled
 Down dawn-lit heavens, burning all the sea! . . .

¹The University Record, XIII (April, 1927), pp. 305-306.

Youth storming up the world! Hot, eager, youth --
 Youth with a question ever on its lips,
 Impatient of the answer! Youth with eyes
 Implacable, remorseless, passionless,
 Crying, "I thirst divinely -- quench my thirst!"
 Crying, "I thirsted and ye helped me not!"
 And brushing past me . . .

Surely greater texts

Lie in the lips and laughter of young girls,
 Who looked at me with pity scarce concealed
 And curious wonder -- me the dusty spider
 Spinning my web in this obdurate room,
 While eager tongues can scarcely pause an hour
 From ripples of speech. . .¹

It seems appropriate to close this chapter on the University of Chicago with the poem "Alma Mater." Mr. Lewis, the author, who became instructor in the University and later Dean of Lewis Institute, speaks of its imperfections as follows: "The second line is the worst in the English language." But the poem so commended itself to the University that it fairly won the title of "The University Song" of the first quarter century and may perhaps long retain that place of honor:

Today we gladly sing the praise
 Of her who owns us as her sons;
 Our loyal voices let us raise,
 And bless her with our benisons.
 Of all fair mothers, fairest she,
 Most wise of all that wisest be,
 Most true of all the true, say we,
 Is our dear Alma Mater.

¹Poetry, VIII (April, 1916), pp. 7-10.

Her mighty learning we would tell,
 Tho' life is something more than lore;
 She could not love her sons so well,
 Loved she not truth and honor more.
 We praise her breadth of charity,
 Her faith that truth shall make men free,
 That right shall live eternally,
 We praise our Alma Mater.

The City White hath fled the earth,
 But where the azure waters lie,
 A nobler city hath its birth,
 The City Gray that ne'er shall die.
 For decades and for centuries,
 Its battlemented tow'rs shall rise,
 Beneath the hope-filled western skies,
 'Tis our dear Alma Mater.¹

¹Quoted from Goodspeed's History of the University of Chicago, p. 453.

Chapter VIII

The West Side

No part of Chicago is of more interest to the sociologist than the West Side. The poets, dramatists and novelists, however, have been inclined to overlook it in favor of more inviting regions nearer the Lake. Much of the material on this district, therefore, is of a semi-sociological nature.

Intrinsically, however, the West Side is as interesting as any part of the city and it is difficult to understand why literary men have neglected it. Figuratively speaking the inhabitants of the West Side live in a little world to themselves. They have their own centers of business and pleasure and seldom if ever get to the Loop. Indeed, it is a common saying that many of them have never seen Lake Michigan.

This is the way Chatfield-Taylor describes it:

Today the West Side is the chosen field of the sociologist and the settlement worker. Within this area lives almost one half of Chicago's population; yet scarcely more than a fifth of its inhabitants are of American-born parentage. Counting those who are immigrants themselves or whose parents were born in a foreign land, the West Side contains a German city as large as Danzig, a Polish city the size of Posen, and a Bohemian city the size of Pilsen. It harbors, too, more men and women and children of

Russian birth than are to be found in Nizhm-Novgorvd, together with so many Italians as there are in Pisa, and as many Swedes as live in Holsingborg. Of Norwegians there are probably as many as inhabit Trondhjem, and of the Irish more than the city of Londonderry houses. Some thirty languages, moreover, are spoken in this vast melting pot, where scarcely more than a generation ago the customs, speech, and traditions of New England were so firmly planted that they seemed ineradicable.¹

As Chatfield-Taylor says, the great West Side is the home of organized charity. Many settlement houses are here, notably Hull House which has given its founder an international reputation. Hull House has a wonderful record of accomplishment which is full of suggestions to social workers the world over. The motives for establishing it are clearly outlined by Miss Addams in her interesting and well written book Twenty Years At Hull House. The following is a statement of what a Social Settlement attempts to do:

It aims, in a measure, to develop whatever of social life its neighborhood may afford, to focus and give form to that life, to bring to bear upon it the results of cultivation and training. . . It is quite impossible for me to say in what proportion or degree the subjective necessity which led to the opening of Hull House combines the three trends: first, the desire to interpret democracy in social terms; secondly, the impulse beating at the very source of our lives, urging us on in the race progress; and thirdly, the Christian movement towards humanitarianism. It is difficult to analyze a living thing; the analysis is at best imperfect.²

¹Chatfield-Taylor, H.C., Chicago, pp. 64-65.

²Addams, Jane, Twenty Years At Hull House, pp. 124-125.

The Stockyards are a feature of enormous magnitude in the life of the city. The figures which reveal the magnitude are huge in totals of dollars and cents. There are twenty-five miles of streets within the yards and three hundred miles of railway track. Seven million gallons of water are consumed here on a hot day. The strange thing about these impressive scenes, however, is that literary men are inclined to neglect them. Aesthetically speaking, perhaps, they are right though conditions are not so bad now as they were in 1906. The following description of the environs of the "Yards" is taken from The Jungle:

Home was not a very attractive place at least in winter. They had been able to buy one stove and this was a small one. At night they would sit huddled around this stove, while they ate their supper off their laps, after which Jurgas and Jonas would smoke a pipe, after which they would all crawl into their beds to get warm, putting out the fire to save coal. They would sleep with all their clothes on, including their overcoats; the children would sleep all crowded into one bed, and yet even so they could not keep warm. . . . They could feel the cold as it crept in through the cracks, reaching out for them with its icy, death dealing fingers; and they would crouch and cower, and try to hide from it, all in vain. It was cruel, iron-hard; and hour after hour they would cringe in its grasp, alone, alone. There would be no one to hear them if they cried out; there would be no help, no mercy. And so on until morning -- when they would go out to another day of toil, a little weaker, a little nearer the time when they would be shaken from the tree.¹

¹sinclair, Upton, The Jungle, pp. 92-93.

Perhaps even more unsavory in reputation than the Stock Yards District and of equal odium in the opinion of men of letters is the region west of the Chicago River known as "The Ghetto." It is the most densely populated district of Chicago and nine-tenths of its residents are Jews. The following account is taken from Louis Wirth's fascinating study of social conditions in Chicago, entitled The Ghetto. It was published in 1928.

The physical characteristics of the Ghetto do not differ materially from the surrounding districts. The streets may be a trifle narrower; the alleys are no filthier. The dry-goods stores have, of course, the same Jewish names over them which may be found elsewhere, and the same "cheap and nasty" goods within. . . .

On the narrow pavement of the narrow street in front is found the omnipresent garbage-box, with full measure pressed down and running over. In all but the severest weather the streets swarm with children, day and night. On bright days groups of adults join the multitude, especially on Saturday and Sunday, or on Jewish holidays. In bad weather the steaming windows show the over crowded rooms within. A morning walk impresses one with the density of the population, but an evening visit reveals a hive.¹

Maxwell Street, the Ghetto's great outdoor market, is full of color, action, odors and dirt. It resembles a European fair more than the market of a great city of today. This fascinating bit of description is also taken

¹Wirth, Louis, The Ghetto, pp. 199-200.

from The Ghetto:

The noises of crowing roosters and geese, the cooing of pigeons, the barking of dogs, the twittering of canary birds, the smell of garlic and of cheeses, the aroma of onions, apples and oranges, and the shouts and curses of sellers and buyers fill the air. Anything can be bought and sold on Maxwell Street. On one stand piled high, are odd sizes of shoes long out of style; on another are copper kettles for brewing beer; on a third are second-hand pants; and one merchant even sells odd, broken pieces of spectacles, watches, and jewelry, together with pocket knives and household tools salvaged from the collections of junk peddlers. Everything has value on Maxwell Street, but the price is not fixed. It is the fixing of the price around which turns the whole plot of the drama enacted daily at the perpetual bazaar of Maxwell Street.¹

Competition is keen. The original Maxwell Street population closed up shop and went to the synagogue every Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, but today the market is deserted only on the Day of Atonement and the Jewish New Year. As one veteran puts it:

"Things aren't as they used to be around here fifteen years ago. We had a better class of Jews then. Everybody was gone on Shabbath. But now everybody is after the money, and you got to get out of business or stay here every day, because Saturday is one of our busiest days." ²

There is in Chicago another street of some importance though curiously uninteresting to the casual observer. It is Archer Avenue made famous by Finley Peter Dunne through

1Wirth, Louis, *The Ghetto*, p. 232.

²Ibid., p. 235.

his universally read "Mr. Dooley."

"There's no better place to see what's goin' on thin the Ar-rchey Road", says Mr. Dooley. "Whin th' illicthric cars is hummin' down th' sthreet an' th' blast goin' sthrong at th' mills, th' noise is that gr-reat ye can't think." ¹

This is the way he describes "The Great Hot Spell."

It was sultry everywhere, but particularly in Archey Road; for in summer Archey Road is a tunnel for the south-west wind, which refreshes itself at the rolling-mill blasts, and spills its wrath upon the just and the unjust alike. Wherefore Mr. Dooley and Mr. McKenna were both steaming as they sat at either side of the door of Mr. Dooley's place, with their chairs tilted back against the posts.

"Hot", said Mr. McKenna.

"Warrum", said Mr. Dooley.

"I think this is the hottest September that ever was", said Mr. McKenna.

"So ye say", said Mr. Dooley. "An' that's because ye're a young man, a kid. If ye was my age, ye'd know betther. How d'ye do, Mrs. Murphy? Go in, an' fill it ye'erself. Ye'll find the funnel undher th' see-gar case. -- Ye'd know betther thin that. Th' Siptimber iv th' year eighteen sixty-eight was so much hotter thin this, if ye wint fr'm wan to th' other, ye'd take noomoney iv th' lungs, -- ye wud so. . .

"As I said, it was a remarkable summer. It rained all August, an' th' boyz wint about on rafts; an' a sthreet-car got lost from th' road, an' I dhrove into th' canal, an' all on boord -- 'Avnin', Mike. Ah-ha! 'twas a great fight. An' Burke got his eye did he? A good man." ²

From the foregoing excerpts and comment it is clear that little literature of real worth has derived its inspiration from "The Great West Side." But this is not as it

¹Dunne, Peter F., Mr. Dooley: In Peace and in War, Preface, xi.

²Dunne, Peter F., Mr. Dooley: In the Hearts of his Countrymen, pp. 180-181.

should be, for this region is particularly rich in human interest. Here, in the regions back of the Stock Yards, along the railroad tracks and under the shadow of the factories dwell the poor and down trodden of every nation. It is hoped that future poets, dramatists and novelists will realize its possibilities to a greater degree.

Chapter IX

Night Life

In a previous chapter, various literary treatments of the Loop by daylight are pointed out. No less interesting, especially to the novelist, are the sights of this part of Chicago by night. After darkness falls the aspect of the Loop alters entirely. This is the way Chatfield-Taylor describes it:

Here a quarter of a million of both sexes are dumped six days a week by the transportation lines to toil for their daily bread. When the office buildings vomit them into the streets at nightfall, they hang to straps in surface steam or elevated cars, until they reach the houses and flats they designate as home; but no sooner is the soot washed from their faces than a goodly proportion of them hasten back to the Loop again, for here are the clubs, theatres, and hotels as well as the banks, offices and department stores. Restless men and neurotic women no longer scamper from sky-scraper to sky-scraper; in their places are affable strollers who tarry now and then to gaze at the modish manikins displayed in the gay shop windows. The street cars still deposit people in the Loop but they are the merry-makers, not toilers, and some of them actually find time to smile. The horse truck, moreover, and the motor van have disappeared and only the limousine and taxicab remain to menace life.¹

Not all the night life of the city, however, is given over to theatrical activities in the Loop or gay

¹Chatfield-Taylor, H.C., Chicago, p. 27.

scenes in the cafés. Men labor at night also and this gives a hard, unseemly aspect to the night life of the city. Ben Hecht once served his time as a newspaper reporter. Incidentally, his work brought him into contact with other late comers and he made literary capital of that fact. Here is what he wrote in "Clocks And Owl Cars."

The seats are half filled. The newspaper man stands on the platform with the conductor and stares at the passengers. The conductor is an elderly man with an unusually mild face.

The people in the car try to sleep. Their heads try to make use of the window panes for pillows. Or they prop up their chins in their palms or they are content to not. There are several young men whose eyes are reddened. A young woman in a cheap but fancy dress. Several mildly aged men. All of them look tired and bored. All of them present a bit of mystery.¹

As the car bounces along the mild-faced conductor lends himself to conversation:

"I seldom put anybody off. The drunks are pretty sad and I feel sorry for them. They just flop over and I wake them up when it comes their time. Sometimes there's girls and they look pretty sad. And sometimes something really interestin' comes off. Once there was a lady who was crying and holding a baby. On the third run it was. I could see she'd up and left her house all of a sudden on account of a quarrel with her husband, because she was only half buttoned together.

"And once there was a man whose pictures I see in the papers the next day as having committed suicide. I remembered him in a minute. Well, no, he didn't look like he was going to commit suicide. He looked about like all the other passengers -- tired and sleepy and sort of down." . . .

The clock in the candy store window says "Three-twelve." A few windows down another clock says "Three-five." The newspaper man walks to his home

studying the clocks. They all disagree as before. And yet their faces are all identical -- as identical as the faces of the owl car passengers seem to the conductor. And here is a clock that has stopped. It says "Twenty after four." And the newspaper man thinks of the picture the conductor identified in the papers the next morning. The picture said something like "Twenty after four" at the wrong time. It's all a bit mixed up.¹

Like Hecht, Sherwood Anderson came to know the more unlovely aspects of the city's night life. Here is a rather disconnected poem of his picturing Chicago before the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment. It is called "Song of The Drunken Business Man":

Don't try, little one, to keep hold of me.
Go home! There's a place for you by the fire.
Age is waiting to welcome you, love --
Go home and sit by the fire.

Into the naked street I ran,
Roaring and bellowing like a cow;
Shaking the walls of the houses down
Proclaiming my dream of black desire.

If there's a thing in this world that's good
it's guts.
I'm a blackbird hovering over the land.
Go on home! Let me alone.

Do you know, little dove, I admire your lips --
They're so red.
What are you doing out in the street?
Take my arm! Look at me!
Ah, you be gone. I'm sixty-five years old tonight,
Now what's the use of beginning again.

Well I'm tired. I ache. What's the use?
I can't meet the note. I have a son.
Let's go home. It's twelve o'clock.
I'm going to get that boy into West Point yet.²

¹Hecht, Ben, A Thousand And One Afternoons In Chicago, p. 204.

²Poetry, X (Sept., 1917), p. 286.

Art Smith, who has lived in Chicago a long time, gives this rather realistic study of the West Side after nightfall in his Polk Street Nocturne:

Broken wagon sleeps in moon-puddle
Beneath three windows.

High -- low -- higher
Broken bottle snoozes shinily in shadow.
Broken lamp hums yellow tune
to grey ghost clutching clothes-line.

On Polk,
Back of Halsted,
In black lot moon-patched,
Where echoes of beauty come to live.¹

In this same collection we find this rather impressionistic poem concerning the famous Adams Street Bridge, by the same author:

Black river murmurs.

Red lights,
Blue lights,
Green lights,
Yellow lights,
Laugh at scared shadows.

Smoke comes up,
Whispering.

Trains come,
Trains stop,
Trains go --

Go.²

¹Poetry, XXIV (Sept., 1924), p. 312.

²Ibid., p. 313.

Besides the numerous realistic scenes by park and lake in the Loop of the city so graphically depicted by Chicago authors, there are other aspects of their work which must not be overlooked. For example, they make much of the bright lights, of drinking, cabaretting and vice. They describe the colorful night life of Bohemia, where the denizens of the underworld may meet with the curiosity seeker and slumming parties from the world of fashion.

Since the abolition of legalized vice in Chicago, the night life of the underworld centers about the cabaret. In 1923 there were seven cabarets along North Clark Street between Grand Avenue and Chestnut Street: the Poodle Dog, the Derby, the Royal Cafe, the Erie Cafe, Spark Plug Inn, the Palace Garden, and the Six-O-Six; while the Red Lantern, Camel Gardens and the Tile Bar had only recently passed out of existence. These cabarets are continually at war with the police and prohibition agents. This is the way Professor Zorbaugh describes them in his sociological study of the Near North Side published in 1929.

Shrill laughter, masculine as well as feminine, shrill talk, shrill singing: "A'm noboddie's weakness it seems, for no dear boy haunts mah dreams, -- and -- so -- ah want some lovin' papa, ah want. . . " Cigarette smoke denser than a London fog. . . smell of bad alcohol, cheap cosmetics, rich cigars, ginger ale, cold cream, sweat, disinfectant. . . Swirling, twirling figures. . . the hoarse plea of

the saxophone. . . a crash as a drunken patron knocks a glass from the waiter's hand. . . young boys with young girls. . . old men with young girls. . . young men with thirty-five-year-old women. . . couples kissing. . . "Let's go somewhere else. . ." "Gimme a drink."

But still the Erie is in a class above the Derby, the cabaret at the other end of the same block. The Derby is newer, cheaper, and wilder. . . The ventilation is far worse than at the Erie. The dining room originally intended for a mere back room of the bar, is overfilled with shouting, screaming patrons. The chorus of entertainers at the Derby is younger and prettier than at the other cabarets. They are also very much more friendly with the patrons. A wink properly directed will bring a girl to your table. Another wink, equally properly directed, will bring the waiter, willing to serve you as much and whatever kind of liquor you may desire.

A block further south and a step further down in the social scale is the Six-O-Six. It has not even a door leading directly to the dining room. Egress is obtained only after a journey down a dark passageway or a walk through the bar room -- the place is frankly dirty, dirtier table cloths, dirtier waiters, dirtier walls, dirtier floor, dirtier glasses and dishes than any other cabaret on the street boasts. On one door in plain view, hangs an obscene sign. . .¹

Closely associated with the cabaret is commercialized vice. Years ago, Chicago's Levee used to be confined to the notorious Twenty-Second Street District on the South Side. It was a region of dance halls and flashy saloons. In The Common Lot, the architect, Jackson Hart, has recourse to it one evening in order to purchase an hour's forgetfulness. The women of the district are described as having "the blanched faces of country girls over whom the city has passed like the plates of a mighty roller." The men had

¹Zorbaugh, Harvey, The Gold Coast And Slum, pp. 117-118.

the tan of the distant prairies from which they had come with their stock. Altogether, the scene is very effectively drawn.

Better still, is a similar account in Skeeters Kirby, Edgar Lee Masters' autobiographical novel. In this story, "Skeeters" and "Billy" visit one of Chicago's open brothels. It was a very elegant and luxurious affair, judging from the account:

We went along a few blocks and entered a large house. Here it was quiet, an air of elegance about the entrance. There were paintings and statuary in the hallway. We passed into a drawing room. Heavy rugs were on the polished floor, the scent of oriental incense in the air. A maid motioned us to seats and left. In a few moments two women entered. They were regally gowned. Their arms and breasts generously exposed were white to a kind of shimmer. Their hair was coifed with the utmost art. One of these girls came to me, the other went to Billy. . .

We walked through the rooms, which were empty. We sat first in the Turkish room. It seemed to me a marvel of carving. We were sunk in heavy pillows side by side. A swinging light cast a ruddy glow over the room. The incense was more sensuous here, more tangible. Between the portieres I saw two eyes, like python eyes. They belonged to a huge old woman, who was covered with diamonds, -- a barbaric stomacher, sunbursts, earring. She gazed intently at us for a moment; then she was gone. . .

We went into the ball room. Marbles of naked dancers, fauns, muses were on pedestals here, grouped around a cataract fountain by the wall. In one corner were a harp and a piano. "How would you like some music?" The wine was swimming in my head. She rang and two negro players entered; and they played "Loin du Bal", "The Wedding of the Wind", "Echoes from the Ball Room", voluptuous expressions of romantic or carnal dreams.¹

¹Masters, E.L., Skeeters Kirby, pp. 154-155

Carl Sandburg in his Chicago Poems has a section dealing with the women of the underworld. In its tolerance and sympathy it reminds one of the attitude of the great historian Lecky, who calls the fallen woman of the underworld "the most mournful and the most awful figure in history." This division is called "Poems Done On A Late Night Car." Here are a few selections:

Trafficker

Among the shadows where two streets cross,
A woman lurks in the dark and waits
To move on when a policeman heaves in view.
Smiling a broken smile from a face
Painted over haggard bones and desperate eyes,
All night she offers passers-by what they will
Of her beauty wasted, body faded, claims gone,
And no takers.

It Is Much

Women of night life amid the lights
Where the line of your full, round throats
Matches in gleam the glint of your eyes
And the ring of your heart-deep laughter:
It is much to be warm and sure of tomorrow.

Women of night life along the shadows
Lean at your throats and skulking the walls,
Gaunt as a bitch worn to the bone
Under the paint of your smiling faces:
It is much to be warm and sure of tomorrow.

Used Up

Roses
Red roses,
Crushed
In the rain and wind
Like the mouths of women
Beaten by the fists of
Men using them.
O little roses
And broken leaves
And petal wisps:
You that so flung your crimson
To the sun
Only yesterday.¹

Among the Chicago authors, then, there seems to be a certain agreement concerning several phases of the night life of the city. They all find here unparallel scenes of misery, hardship and suffering. On the other hand these writers see in the colorful night life of Bohemia an interest and glamour not often found in large cities.

¹Sandburg, Carl, Chicago Poems, pp. 147-155.

Chapter X

A Forward Look

In view of the rapid growth of Chicago and the tendency of her authors to speculate on the future, it is perhaps worth while to look forward and conjecture what the future may bring forth for Chicago in the way of literary material. Few cities hold more in promise for the author who is interested in contemporary life and civilization. To begin with, Chicago is huge and varied. Its history is already crowded with notable achievements. All the world knows that Chicago ranks fourth in size among the world's great cities. J. Paul Goode, a geographer of note, in a recent publication, points out some of the advantages focusing upon the site of the city, and makes the startling assertion that it has scarcely begun to grow. He says:

Chicago is now a great merchandising focus, one of the greatest the world has ever known. Think of the wealth of the area served by this great network of railways. Within the magic circle struck with a radius of one night's railway ride from Chicago, there are now over fifty million people. Within that wonderful ring lies the largest area of continuously fertile land on this or any other continent. Within it also are the richest producing iron fields in the world, at present being worked. Within it is a coal field with a reserve greater than that of all France, Belgium, Russia and Japan combined. And close enough to supply it with power for development in an area that will look to Chicago are deposits of coal between four and five times as large as those of all Europe.¹

¹Goode, J. Paul, Geographic Back Ground of Chicago, p. 67.

Chicago is becoming more interesting if anything, than she ever has been. Her appearance is more impressive, and life within her borders is more varied and colorful. August Agache said when he visited the city in 1904 that it left upon him "a very painful impression." He stated that the city seemed to be a veritable hill without ideals. Now, after a quarter of a century, the city has been completely metamorphosed. Chicago has become not only the most interesting city in the United States, but it is also fast becoming one of the most beautiful cities of the world.

The "Chicago Plan" already alluded to in this study has grown largely since it was given its original impetus. Already the committee in charge of the work has spent \$470,000,000. And the further work immediately projected will add considerably more than four hundred millions. A cool \$900,000,000 all told. Doesn't that stir the imagination a bit?

The grand scale on which accomplishments in Chicago are attempted, the daring spirit that animates her business men and captains of industry -- all this in itself is of literary interest. It bespeaks the youth of America, and poets and novelists will doubtless continue to find in it a theme. Many years ago Daniel H. Burnham in a speech in London made the following remarks, which suggest forcibly the spirit of the new Chicago:

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood, and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans. . . Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that will stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty."

Still another feature of Chicago that is likely to appeal to the man of letters is the unprecedented political situation -- which alas! seems likely to continue. The interest that Carl Sandburg shows in his poem of 1920 will probably not pass soon:

"Cahoots"

Play it across the table
What if we steal this city blind?
If they want anything let 'em nail it down.

Harness bulls, dicks, front office men,
And the high goats up on the bench,
Ain't they all in cahoots?
Ain't it fifty-fifty all down the line,
Petemen, dips, boosters, stick-ups and guns --
What's to hinder. . . 1.

The reputation of Chicago for crime has fastened upon the imagination of the United States as has no other city. It is the current conventional belief that the criminal is loose upon her streets. And what is surprising in this situation? Within the boundaries of the County of Cook there were three hundred and ninety-eight

¹ Sandburg, Carl, Smoke And Steel, p. 45.

murders in 1928 alone.

But don't be alarmed, but rather interested. Chicago is "the young overgrown bully among the cities." It is a motley of foreign races. And you cannot convert an urban mass of four million sould to Puritanism overnight. Chicago never wanted prohibition; consequently, the breakdown of the city government is the result.

Meanwhile, the good people, the busy people, go off to their modern suburban towns, play golf, build modern suburban towns, play golf, build modern homes and gardens for their children and completely ignore the smoke, the stew and the vice of the city.

In 1893, Chicago, with a population of 1,100,000 and just beginning to take on a metropolitan aspect, presumed to present a World's Fair. The manner in which this task was achieved aroused the admiration of the whole world and was a source of inspiration for the one to be held in 1933. Two years hence, Chicago will celebrate the hundredth anniversary of her incorporation as a city. It is to be an island heaven this time, the prospectus tells us. Placid old Lake Michigan, that thrilling and passionately loved bit of nature, is again to be thrust before the imagination of the continent. The people of the city are to forget their discords and scandals and failures of years past, and go forward to another dream, another exposition of art and progress.

Signs are not lacking that with all of her crudeness, Chicago is advancing culturally. It seems worth while to point out here several hopeful indications that the city of the future will in a literary sense be more congenial than in the past to the man of letters.

Everyone is familiar with the old gag that "when she got ready Chicago would make culture hum." Culture is now being made to hum there as nowhere else in the world. The gathering of students at the Art Institute is something majestic and unparalleled. If numbers are to count, Chicago is already the art center of the nation.

Grand Opera is also one of the outcomes of the city's urge for beauty. It is now one of the most potent factors in the cultural life of the community. Practically every great city of the world has recognized this since grand opera became one of the major branches of musical art. Milan, Rome, Paris and Berlin have had their opera companies, in some cases for generations.

Chicago's Civic Opera Company is one of the youngest and at the same time one of the most thriving operatic groups of first rank in the world. Its magnificent new temple was dedicated on November 4, 1929. For the first time in the history of the art, a great opera company is now housed in its own income producing building.

In the same year, also, the company entered a new and vastly important field -- it began to train future

material for the operatic stage. Six European scholarships have been endowed by members of the board of trustees and are now available to Chicago artists ready for their debuts on the operatic stage.

About a year ago, the Opera opened its ballet school under the direction of Laurent Novrkoff. This school is destined to play an important role in the training of dancers. While it is intended primarily to provide new blood for the Civic Opera Ballet, its courses will also include plastic and dramatic dancing. For future years, also, but a chorus and orchestra school are envisioned.

Several years ago, an English clergyman, the Reverend Cannon Hannon, visited the city and was particularly impressed with its invincible spirit. For Chicago, he maintains, there are no limitations at all:

Whatever ought to be done, Chicago will do. Nothing is too small, nothing too great to be attempted and carried through. It may be an insignificant matter like the comfort of a helpless and foolish stranger. It may be a problem against which civilized society has broken its teeth for centuries, like the coil of prostitution. Chicago can be convinced that it can be got right and Chicago means to do it.¹

While in the city, it seems, he attended a literary dinner of some sort in which one of the speakers made the remark that he looked forward to the day "when Chicago

¹Birmingham, Geo.A., Connaught To Chicago, pp. 111-112.

would be the world's center of literature, music and art." In the light of recent developments, this is no silly boast. Dean Hannon, at any rate, takes it seriously, when he says:

There are no bounds to what a man can do except his own self-distrust. There is nothing beyond the reach of a city which unfalteringly believes in itself. No other city believes in itself so wholeheartedly as Chicago does and I expect Chicago will be the world center of literature, music and art. There is nothing to stop it, unless indeed Chicago itself gives up the idea and chooses to be something else instead. It may, I hope it will, decide to be the New Jerusalem, and I shall humbly sue to be admitted as a citizen. My petition will, I am sure, be granted, for the hospitality of the people of Chicago seems to exceed the hospitality of other parts of America. I am not sure that I should be altogether happy there, even under the new perfected condition of life; but perhaps I may.¹

But the story is not yet finished. Chicago in its alternative moods is still in the making. As Thomas Curtis Clark writes in a recent issue of "The Christian Century":

In this Chicago let us build our world
Of deed and dream; here let there be unfurled
A flag that tells of service unto man;
Let earnest years evolve a master plan
Whereby this wondrous age may have a voice,
Wherein all generations shall rejoice.
Our destined task is not to reckon gold,
To build wide marts where goods are bought and
sold.

Let Beauty bloom. Let Art here have her way
Amid these towers and battlements of gray.
Let Music triumph in these aisles of trade,
For poet-prophets let large gifts be made.
And let there grow fair temples unto God
Who raised our stately portals from the sod.

¹Birmingham, Geo. A., Connaught To Chicago, p. 120

Than shall our town adorn the honored line
Of Greece and Rome -- a citadel and shrine.¹

¹Clark, T.C., "Chicago", The Christian Century, XLVII
(June 4, 1930), p. 714.

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